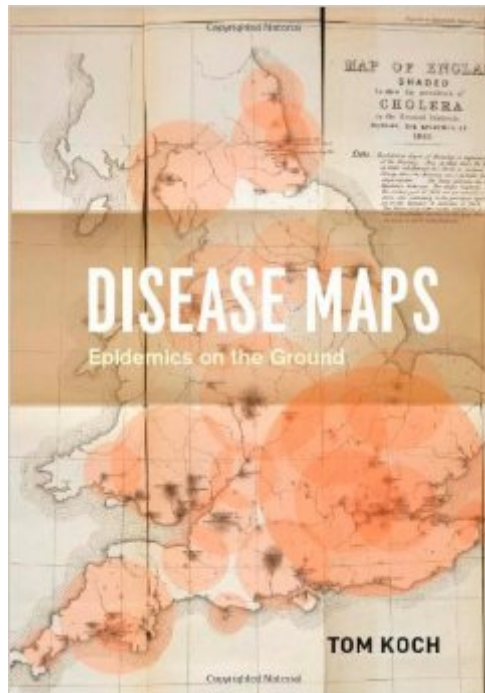


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# Disease Maps: Epidemics On The Ground



## Synopsis

In the seventeenth century, a map of the plague suggested a radical idea—that the disease was carried and spread by humans. In the nineteenth century, maps of cholera cases were used to prove its waterborne nature. More recently, maps charting the swine flu pandemic caused worldwide panic and sent shockwaves through the medical community. In *Disease Maps*, Tom Koch contends that to understand epidemics and their history we need to think about maps of varying scale, from the individual body to shared symptoms evidenced across cities, nations, and the world. *Disease Maps* begins with a brief review of epidemic mapping today and a detailed example of its power. Koch then traces the early history of medical cartography, including pandemics such as European plague and yellow fever, and the advancements in anatomy, printing, and world atlases that paved the way for their mapping. Moving on to the scourge of the nineteenth century—cholera—Koch considers the many choleras argued into existence by the maps of the day, including a new perspective on John Snow's science and legacy. Finally, Koch addresses contemporary outbreaks such as AIDS, cancer, and H1N1, and reaches into the future, toward the coming epidemics. Ultimately, *Disease Maps* redefines conventional medical history with new surgical precision, revealing that only in maps do patterns emerge that allow disease theories to be proposed, hypotheses tested, and treatments advanced.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 344 pages

Publisher: University Of Chicago Press; 1 edition (June 30, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0226449351

ISBN-13: 978-0226449357

Product Dimensions: 7 x 1 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.2 out of 5 stars See all reviews (4 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #893,611 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #140 in Books > Science & Math > Earth Sciences > Cartography #400 in Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Research > Epidemiology #623 in Books > Medical Books > Administration & Medicine Economics > Public Health > Epidemiology

## Customer Reviews

When there was a recent lethal breakout of e-coli in Germany, the great question was, "Where is the

germ coming from?" It was time for epidemiological maps, tools that would chart disease and place so that we could get some answers. It was tough to do; such maps require data from many sources. Even so, good maps could do nothing to prevent nationalistic finger-pointing; remember the Germans initially blamed Spanish cucumbers? Eventually, the maps, and countless other data from clinicians and researchers with microscopes, helped find an answer that was scientifically sound. We count on the maps of disease and have done so for 300 years, though we did not know what we were doing at first and we still have to relearn basic lessons when something new comes up. Those are among the themes of *Disease Maps: Epidemics on the Ground* (University of Chicago Press) by Tom Koch. The author is a professor of medical geography, who in this work has focused on the development and problems of map theory. The book is extensively illustrated, from engravings that show sailing ships and mermaids on the seas all the way to modern, computer-generated maps, all representing tools that have been armaments against disease. The first maps shown here are from 1690 and have to do with plague. The rise of yellow fever in the eighteenth century was mapped when the disease came to New York. A map from 1796 shows wharf areas and locations of death from the illness, and demonstrates a false explanation: the illness was shown to be caused by bad smells. The most fascinating chapters of Koch's book are a rewriting the lessons from the most famous medical map in history. John Snow was an anesthesiologist, one who had assisted Queen Victoria in her deliveries, but he had a passion for combating cholera.

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