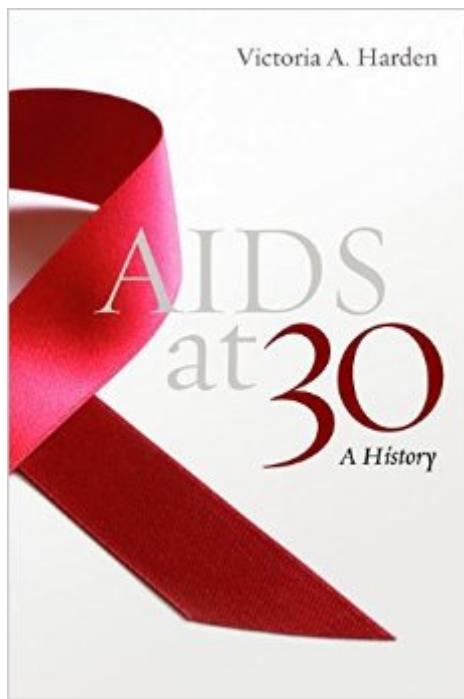


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AIDS At 30: A History



Synopsis

Society was not prepared in 1981 for the appearance of a new infectious disease, but we have since learned that emerging and reemerging diseases will continue to challenge humanity. AIDS at 30 is the first history of HIV/AIDS written for a general audience that emphasizes the medical response to the epidemic. Award-winning medical historian Victoria A. Harden approaches the AIDS virus from philosophical and intellectual perspectives in the history of medical science, discussing the process of scientific discovery, scientific evidence, and how laboratories found the cause of AIDS and developed therapeutic interventions. Similarly, her book places AIDS as the first infectious disease to be recognized simultaneously worldwide as a single phenomenon. After years of believing that vaccines and antibiotics would keep deadly epidemics away, researchers, doctors, patients, and the public were forced to abandon the arrogant assumption that they had conquered infectious diseases. By presenting an accessible discussion of the history of HIV/AIDS and analyzing how aspects of society advanced or hindered the response to the disease, AIDS at 30 illustrates for both medical professionals and general readers how medicine identifies and evaluates new infectious diseases quickly and what political and cultural factors limit the medical community's response.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In AIDS at 30, Harden has written a masterful history of the first three decades of AIDS. Actually, she traces the emergence of HIV even further back to the early decades of the 20th Century in

Africa where clear signs of HIV infection were evident. More solid evidence is found in the 1970s when researchers went back to examine stored blood samples of those whose deaths fit the profile of infection with HIV. It's clear HIV has been with us for about a century, but it escaped the confines of Africa only in the past 50 years or so, and it didn't begin reaching epidemic status until the 1980s. Harden presents her text as one for the general reader, and indeed her presentation is lucid and easily comprehended. As I began reading the first chapter I feared I was taking up a text that was *too* simplistic and aimed for a reader with no science background whatsoever. However, the pace picks up quickly, and while the writing remains clear and straightforward, this reader was thoroughly engaged with the content throughout the remainder of the text. It is a fascinating read. I was impressed with the thoroughness and comprehensiveness of her text, as well as its incisiveness. Her text is about as lengthy as Jonathan Engel's *The Epidemic*, but Harden covers an additional ten years in the same amount of space, and even where the chronology overlaps, Harden supplies more information than Engel did. Harden utilizes a much broader array of sources for her study rather than simply regurgitating articles from *The New York Times* and *Newsweek* as Engel did. To be fair, she may have an advantage over Engel because she is employed by the National Institutes of Health as a historian, and therefore she has access to oral histories which may not have been available to Engel.

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