**Ebola**

**Ancient Ebola outbreak: The first Ebola outbreak may have occurred 2,400 years ago in Greece -- not in Congo in 1976, as previously believed. Powel Kazanjian, a professor of infectious diseases at the University of Michigan, has analyzed the writings of the ancient Greek historian Thucydides and found surprising similarities between the Ebola epidemic that recently ravaged West Africa and a mysterious plague that struck Athens in 430 B.C., killing 25 percent of the city-state's population. Thucydides describes Athenians suffering Ebola-like symptoms such as fever, fatigue, vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration, and inexplicable bleeding. There are other clues, The Washington Post reports. Researchers have established that two species of fruit bats native to sub-Saharan Africa -- where bat soup is a delicacy -- are carriers of Ebola. Kazanjian believes these fruit bats might have infected some sub-Saharan Africans who, Thucydides wrote, traveled to Greece to work as farmers or servants. Medical historians have variously attributed the Athenian outbreak to cholera, malaria, smallpox, and bubonic plague. But Thucydides' account, says Kazanjian, "raises the question of whether Ebola may have spilled over from its animal reservoir to humans well before scientists first identified it." *(The Week magazine, July 10, 2015)***

**Given current infection rates, Americans have a roughly 1 in 3,934,300 chance of dying from Ebola. They have a far greater chance of dying from having their pajamas catch on fire (1 in 983,575), being legally executed (1 in 95,959), and being killed in an accidental firearm discharge (1 in 6,492). *(WashingtonPost.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, November 14, 2014)***

**Bad week for: Fear-mongering, after a new Gallup poll found that 17 percent of Americans named Ebola as America's "most urgent health problem." A much smaller percentage named obesity, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, or substance abuse as most urgent, even though they collectively kill millions of people a year. *(The Week magazine, November 28, 2014)***

**Monrovia, Liberia: Free of Ebola, for now: Liberia has had no Ebola patients for the past two weeks, and if it remains clear for two more it will be officially declared free of the hemorrhagic fever. But few are celebrating. The disease is still spreading in neighboring Sierra Leone and Guinea, and this week the World Health Organization announced that the death toll from the current outbreak, which began in late 2013, had passed 10,000. The WHO warned against complacency. "This is a virus that can go into hiding for some weeks," it said, "only to return again with a vengeance." A single undetected case can start a new cascade of infection. *(The Week magazine, March 27, 2015)***

**A single Ebola patient treated in a U.S. hospital generates eight 55-gallon barrels of medical waste each day, including the protective garb used by caregivers, anything used by the patient, his personal waste, and anything used to clean his room. *(Los Angeles Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, November 7, 2014)***

**The spread of Ebola in Liberia has slowed dramatically thanks to medical intervention and community-education efforts. The U.S. military has scaled back the number of treatment beds its building there from 1,700 to 650. Still, health officials said there are more than 1,000 new cases every week in West Africa, mostly in Guinea and Sierra Leone. *(The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, December 5, 2014)***

**The two Dallas nurses who were infected with Ebola while treating Thomas Eric Duncan of Liberia had contact with 344 people before they were diagnosed and hospitalized. How many of those 344 people later tested positive for Ebola? 0. *(The Week magazine, December 31, 2014)***

**The Ebola virus has been circulating in bats and marsupials for 10 million to 24 million years, scientists at the University of Buffalo have estimated. That makes Ebola at least 50 times older than mankind. *(TheDailyBeast.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, October 31, 2014)***

**Hundreds of doctors and nurses have cared for Ebola patients in hospitals in Atlanta; Bethesda, Md.; Dallas; New York City; and Omaha. These dedicated health-care workers aren't being quarantined for the simple reason that quarantines would make it logistically impossible for U.S. hospitals to care for Ebola patients. The same holds true for West Africa. If people stop volunteering to fight Ebola there, the epidemic will surely spread, and the whole world will be in danger. Self-monitoring "strikes the right balance" between prudence and panic and is the best option to ensure "America's and the world's health safety." *(The Week magazine, November 14, 2014)***

**Good week for: Turnabout, after Rwanda announced it would start screening all visiting Americans and Spaniards for Ebola, since the U.S. and Spain have had cases, while that African nation has not. *(The Week magazine, October 31, 2014)***

**Ebola source revealed: A little boy playing in a tree full of bats may have been the original source of the ongoing Ebola epidemic in West Africa, which has infected more than 20,000 people and killed some 8,100. Researchers recently identified a 2-year-old boy named Emile Ouamouno as the current strain's "patient zero," but they were unsure at first how the toddler -- who died in December 2013 -- initially contracted the disease. Previous outbreaks have typically began in adult patients who probably contracted Ebola by eating contaminated bushmeat. But a team of scientists from the Robert Koch Institute in Germany now reports that Ouamouno probably caught Ebola while playing in a hollowed-out tree on the outskirts of his village -- a tree that was also home to a colony of bats from the species Mops condylurus, mouse-size mammals that are known to be carriers of the disease. "These bats are reportedly targeted by children who regularly hunt and grill them over small fries," lead researcher Fabian Leendertz tells NationalGeographic.com. Ebola is a zoonotic virus that can pass directly from animals to humans, often without making the initial host sick. *(The Week magazine, January 16, 2015)***

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