

BOOK REVIEW

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COVID-19 The pandemic that never should have happened, and how to stop the next one

Abstract

Debora Mackenzie guides the reader through the virus Covid-19 from the first moments of happening in Wuhan December of 2019 till the preparation to the next wave of the pandemic. Her book is well structured and comprehensive, at the same time it explains the recent pandemic situation within the limits of clarity. Helps to dispel misconceptions about the coronavirus and makes clear its relationship to various types of the flu. And the concluding part of the book contains conclusions on the first wave of Covid-19, and hints and predictions how to prepare for the next pandemic at social and governmental organisations level.

Keywords: Covid-19, WHO, pandemic, governmental activities, global crisis, rumour-mongering

The author Deborah Mackenzie is a former biochemical researcher, key expert on the field of public health. She has written for New Scientist Magazine for thirty-six years and belongs to the world-renowned leading science journalists. Although she had to write her first book within a tight deadline, it is well-structured and written in a highly accessible style in which the author interprets the SARS Covid-19 virus. SARS means: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (URL1). The names of Covid-19 are derived from the following abbreviations: Co for corona, vi for virus, d for disease, and 19 means the years of appearing. Mackenzie analyses clearly and authoritatively all the significant aspect of this pandemic step by step. The book consists of 304 pages covering eight chapters which in chronological order explains the history and background of this pan-

demical and describes how it spread, what are the most significant differences with former similar types of viruses just like Lyme, SARS, MERS, Ebola, Bird flu, Swine flu, Zika, etc.

In 2017 Shi Zhengli the Wuhan Institute of virology found the SARS in nature: *'They found segments with all the exact gene sequences required to build the original SARS virus in bats from the one cave near Kunming and evidence that the viruses were actively recombining gene segments. After 14 years, the long search was over: they knew for sure where SARS came from.'* (Mackenzie, 2020). Therefore it is crystal clear for the WHO and the whole science world, that the bats are a potential threat because they are SARS virus carriers and are also immune to the virus. These (horseshoe) bats found on all populated continents, but a direct connection is required to catch the virus from them. *'In April 2020, the executive secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity called on China to shut down wildlife markets, like the one in Wuhan linked to Covid-19'* (Mackenzie, 2020).

It is essential to understand the spread and behaviours of influenza to understand those of Covid-19. Both viruses are transmitted in the droplets we exhale. Both viruses cause a pandemic. The flu remains year after year. But in the case of influenza, the human immune system provides an effective defensive response. Even if the flu virus mutates year after year, virologists come together twice a year for a meeting at World Health Organisation's headquarters in Geneva to create the vaccine to be developed for the new mutation. Therefore, the virologists try to produce sufficient quantity of the new vaccine every year. In the case of Covid-19, the human body has no established response system, and the virus is unfamiliar to the body. And the development of the vaccine is in an attempted phase - as is undoubtedly known. *'And although the flu is the one virus for which we have effective antiviral drugs, it isn't clear we have enough of those either. If we're unready for the pandemic, we can see coming, how can we be ready for the ones we don't?'* (Mackenzie, 2020).

In view of the future, the author enumerates a number of urgent things to be done. It is of paramount importance that the world's leading major powers and developed countries come together and start closed cooperation. The joint work should involve international epidemiological research institutes and health organisations. The author's second suggestion is: It is key to develop our virus monitor and signalling systems. Thus, we can detect and respond promptly when we attain the critical level. Mackenzie's next advice is to acquire enough personal protective equipment. And the experts should then have more protective equipment, which should be developed by the experts more reliably. In her further advices, she discusses the details of the preparation for the next wave of

Covid-19, from different point of views. The author also constantly emphasises the importance of public intervention. The governmental organisations must be the leaders in this fight. Deborah Mackenzie composed the book according to a completely logical perspective, providing an objective assessment. And in doing so, it allows representatives from several disciplines to provide meaningful use of some of the book's details. It additionally provides a wealth of background material and information to those involved in public sector like health, social, operational and organisational management. It supports us, to understand the context of public and leadership engagements for the future. Which, according to the book, proves to be considerably bigger and more important than before.

References

Mackenzie, D. (2020): *COVID-19 The pandemic that never should have happened, and how to stop the next one*. New York: Hachette Books, 304.

Online links in this article

URL 1: *Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)-multi-country outbreak - Update 53*. https://www.who.int/csr/don/2003_05_12/en/