

Yellow Jack: How Yellow Fever Ravaged America and Walter Reed Discovered Its Deadly Secrets

By John R. Pierce, James V. Writer

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The end of a scourge

"The prayer that has been mine for twenty years, that I might be permitted in some way or some time to do something to alleviate human suffering, has been answered!"
--Major Walter Reed, writing to his wife, New Year's Eve, 1900

As he wrote to his wife of his stunning success in the mission to identify the cause of yellow fever and find a way to eradicate the disease, Walter Reed had answered the prayers of millions. For more than 250 years, the yellow jack had ravaged the Americas, bringing death to millions and striking panic in entire populations. The very mention of its presence in a city or town produced instant chaos as thousands fled in terror, leaving the frail, the weak, and the ill to fend for themselves.

Yellow Jack tracks the history of this deadly scourge from its earliest appearance in the Caribbean 350 years ago, telling the compelling story of a few extraordinarily brave souls who struggled to understand and eradicate yellow fever. Risking everything for the cause of science and humanity, Reed and his teammates on the U.S. Army Yellow Fever Board invaded the heart of enemy territory in Cuba to pursue the disease--and made one of the twentieth century's greatest medical discoveries. This thrilling adventure tells the timeless tale of their courage, ingenuity, and triumph in the face of adversity.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
There isn't much new in this workmanlike examination of yellow fever, which focuses on the American impact of this deadly hemorrhagic disease closely related to the West Nile virus. While mostly a tropical disease, yellow fever reached as far north as Philadelphia in 1793. But particularly in the South, deadly plagues were the norm year after year. Pierce, a physician and retired colonel with the U.S. Army, and coauthor Writer describe the debates over the cause of the disease, which many thought originated in the Caribbean, and the work to determine the mode of transmission. In 1900, after the Spanish-American War, Walter Reed headed the Yellow Fever Board sent to Havana and rather quickly confirmed earlier suspicions that mosquitoes were responsible; in remarkably short order the board rid the entire island of yellow fever. But the disease's virulence and the harsh working conditions threatened the researchers themselves. The authors explain this in their hyperbolic style: "Eight loyal and fearless soldiers in the war against an invisible foe had, in the noblest sentiments of the profession, died in hopes of saving others.... [N]o other virus in the history of laboratory research has taken away so many of those working to solve its mysteries." B&w illus. *(Apr.)*
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From Booklist
From the first time an illness with symptoms like those of yellow fever was reported in the Spanish stronghold at Yucatan and spreading to Havana, Cuba, reduced its population by a third, it took nearly 300 years to pinpoint the cause of that fatal disease. The long effort suffered not from want of trying, according to U.S. Army physician Pierce. Some of the most notable medical minds of their times, including the renowned Benjamin Rush, tackled the puzzle with negligible success. Stubbornly perennial as summer heat, yellow fever continued to wreak havoc in U.S. cities from Philadelphia to New Orleans. Despite the connection French physician Louis Daniel Beauperthuy made in the mid-nineteenth century between yellow fever and mosquitoes, not until after the Spanish-American War did Major Walter Reed and his medical team make serious inroads into cause and cure. Based upon a series of articles Pierce penned for a military medical journal, this chronicle of the rise and eventual fall of yellow fever traces a substantial medical history. *Donna Chavez*
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Review
"A fascinating examination of how science works in the real world. This book may inspire future Walter Reeds to solve tomorrow's medical mysteries." (*Journal of College Science Teaching*)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Francis Mason:

Spent a free time for you to be fun activity to complete! A lot of people spent their leisure time with their family, or their very own friends. Usually they performing activity like watching television, gonna beach, or picnic from the park. They actually doing ditto every week. Do you feel it? Would you like to something different to fill your own free time/ holiday? Might be reading a book can be option to fill your free time/

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Patricia Gallagher:

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Patricia Morales:

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