
Maryn McKenna

**Beating Back the Devil: On the Front Lines with the Disease
Detectives of the Epidemic Intelligence Service**



Title: Beating Back the Devil: On the Front Lines with the Disease Detectives of the Epidemic Intelligence Service

Author: Maryn McKenna

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Description

IN THE WAR AGAINST DISEASES, THEY ARE THE SPECIAL FORCES.

They always keep a bag packed. They seldom have more than twenty-four hours' notice before they are dispatched. The phone calls that tell them to head to the airport, sometimes in the middle of the night, may give them no more information than the country they are traveling to and the epidemic they will tackle when they get there.

The universal human instinct is to run from an outbreak of disease. These doctors run toward it.

They are the disease detective corps of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the federal agency that tracks and tries to prevent disease outbreaks and bioterrorist attacks around the world. They are formally called the Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) — a group founded more than fifty years ago out of fear that the Korean War might bring the use of biological weapons — and, like intelligence operatives in the traditional sense, they perform their work largely in anonymity. They are not household names, but over the years they were first to confront the outbreaks that became known as hantavirus, Ebola virus, and AIDS. Now they hunt down the deadly threats that dominate our headlines: West Nile virus, anthrax, and SARS.

In this riveting narrative, Maryn McKenna — the only journalist ever given full access to the EIS in its fifty-three-year history — follows the first class of disease detectives to come to the CDC after September 11, the first to confront not just naturally occurring outbreaks but the man-made threat of bioterrorism. They are talented researchers — many with young families — who trade two years of low pay and extremely long hours for the chance to be part of the group that has helped eradicate smallpox, push back polio, and solve the first major outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease, toxic shock syndrome, and E. coli O157.

Urgent, exhilarating, and compelling, *Beating Back the Devil* goes with the EIS as they try to stop epidemics — before the epidemics stop us.

Insightful reviews

Wealththeow: This is a book about the Epidemic Intelligence Service, the "disease detective corps" of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For three weeks, Ph.D.s, nurses, doctors, veterinarians, dentists, and even lawyers are trained in epidemiology and public health. They are put through a rigorous class schedule, frightening simulations, and even yanked out of classes to deal with disease outbreaks. Once they are fully trained, they spend two years working where-ever they are needed. Their work is multi-pronged: they go door-to-door, interviewing every contact of an infected person; they use molecular biology to pin down which cases of a disease are involved in an outbreak; they reassure the public. Sometimes they are assigned to work in a state, coordinating and investigating. But with only days or even hours notice, members of the EIS fly into war-torn countries to work with refugees, into politically charged anthrax investigations, to Listeria outbreaks afflicting a trailer park. They must be prepared for any situation.

This is a very exciting book! McKenna splits the chapters between the culture and training of the EIS (they have to wear full military uniform every Wednesday, for instance), and their investigation of disease outbreaks. Both are fascinating, but hampered because McKenna insists on writing a full paragraph about the family and professional life of every person mentioned, no matter how tangential. A better book would have focused on a few people, or cut out the sentences about their build and how many children they have.

I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in public health.

John: Most insightful as both a look into the history of recent emerging pathogens (HIV, MRSA, etc...), as well as the mindset of physicians who choose this as their career. Not as successful as it could have been in portraying the 2002 EIS class as "characters," as most chapters focused on specific diseases, not people, leaving the human stories somewhat disjointed. Overall, a good and genuinely interesting read.

Sallyavena: I picked this book because my husband was an EIS officer for the last 2 years. He loved his time as one and I wanted to read more about other's experience. The author probably picked the 2 busiest years the CDC has had in a long time. They dealt with 9/11, Anthrax and SARS on top of all of the normal stuff. It seems like those couple of years were pivotal when it came to the world and not only the USA getting it's act together to enable them to handle global public health threats. My husbands 2 years weren't nearly as exciting, although he did get to work on some interesting stuff and go to some very interesting places, it would have been crazier had the world not had it's act together. I think that is one thing that this book brings to light. It was an interesting read for me and is well written, but I don't know how interesting it would be for someone that didn't have a connection to EIS or had an interest in infectious disease.

Summer: the basis of this e-book used to be so interesting. I realized much concerning the lifestyles of the Epidemic Intelligence Service, which I had slightly heard of before. the author is sweet with a flip of word and lots of of her descriptive sentences have been inspired. Unfortunately, the writer doesn't understand how to inform a story! Her makes an attempt have been impossibly disjointed, everywhere in the place, and suffering from tangents. She integrated atypical info that have been distracting. She bounced from individual to person, from position to place, from the far away earlier to fashionable times. One particularly needed to focus to get the thinnest line at the tales she was once attempting to tell. that is quite a shame, simply because those are very attention-grabbing stories. each one bankruptcy is a more often than not self-contained narration of an important affliction outbreak. It was once interesting to examine the projects the epidemiologists undertook to discover the resource of the ailments after which to attempt to include them. almost like a truly low-key episode of "House". I had formerly no longer considered the methods politics can tell our public well-being judgements - the issues we're keen or unwilling to do as a society, in line with who's getting in poor health and how. It used to be particularly fascinating to examine the idea techniques and weighing of professionals and cons among remaining a spot down or publishing an advisement. Overall, this used to be a humdrum e-book approximately an enticing subject. The evidence have been attention-grabbing sufficient to pull me prior the author's negative story-telling skills. yet i would

not learn whatever by way of her again. and i am convinced i will locate greater books at the related subject.

Kathleen Hagen: Beating again the Devil, via Maryn McKenna, Narrated through Ellen Archer, Produced through Tantor Media, Downloaded from audible.com. This is a riveting publication from begin to finish. I can't enhance at the publisher's assessment so I comprise it here. The common intuition is to run from a deadly disease of disease. those medical professionals run towards it. They regularly maintain a bag packed. They seldom have greater than 24hours sooner than they're dispatched. they're instructed purely their kingdom of vacation spot and the epidemic they're going to take on after they get there. they're the diseasedetective corps of the united states facilities for affliction keep watch over and Prevention (CDC), the federal service provider that tracks and attempts to avoid sickness outbreaks andbioterrorist assaults round the world. officially known as the Epidemic Intelligence carrier (EIS), they've got faced outbreaks of AIDS, Ebola virus, toxicshock syndrome, and E. coli 0157; they've got helped get rid of smallpox and thrust back polio. Now they seek out the lethal threats that dominate our headlines:SARS, West Nile virus, and anthrax. during this riveting narrative, Maryn McKenna follows the 1st classification of sickness detectives to come back to the CDC after 9/11. She is going on scene with those gifted younger researchers, who alternate years of low pay and very lengthy hours for the opportunity to be a part of the groupwho heroically attempts to forestall epidemics...before they cease us.

Michael: this is often this type of paintings i'd be doing if I have been ten instances as ambitious, yet simply as cool.

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