

The Geography of

S.A.R.S

For Immediate Release

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Hand in hand with the history of any seriously infectious disease is its geography. Where did it first take root? Where did it go next? How did it travel?

Is the geography of each epidemic unique? Do the travel itineraries of different diseases follow patterns? Is transmission across borders accidental, simply a matter of an infected person getting on a plane for here rather than there – or are there predispositions in various locales for a disease to wreak greater havoc than in other places? Are immune systems stronger in certain societies than in others?

Is a disease's migration in any way predictable?

At the American Geographical Society we are able to provide editors and journalists with a good deal of information about epidemics. For example, as early as October, 1987 our Geographical Review (GR) published "Geographic Patterns of A.I.D.S in the U.S." and in 1994 followed up with "A.I.D.S in Asia." Medical Geography, after all, is one of the many specialties of the field.

One of our members, Dr. Jacques M. May produced an early "Atlas of Diseases." in the 1950's which provided detailed information about the whereabouts and movement of many different infectious diseases. Geographers, as it turns out, know a good deal about the "wholesale influences" – not just where things happen, but why they might, and do, happen in a particular place. In fact, the traditional journalistic questions of who, what, when, where, why and how are most often the geographer's questions.

The American Geographical Society has a great deal of already categorized information on hand – available to editors and journalists. We also have those 600 members whose work is almost always able to cast light on subjects that need illuminations.

Please contact our Executive Director, Mary Lynne Bird at 212.422.5456, or at Mediaresponse@amergeog.org. Through her you'll be able to receive background and even insights about what happens in our world and why.

The American Geographical Society is our nation's oldest geographical society, established in 1851.

The Society's website is www.amergeog.org.

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