



The Woman with a Worm in Her Head: And Other True Stories of Infectious Disease

By Pamela Nagami M.D.

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A normal, healthy woman becomes host to a pork tapeworm that is burrowing into her brain and disabling her motor abilities.

A handsome man contracts Chicken Pox and ends up looking like the victim of a third degree burn.

A vigorous young athlete is bitten by an insect and becomes a target for flesh-eating strep.

Even the most innocuous everyday activities such as eating a salad for lunch, getting bitten by an insect, and swimming in the sea bring human beings into contact with dangerous, often deadly microorganisms. In *The Woman with a Worm in Her Head*, Dr. Pamela Nagami reveals-through real-life cases-the sobering facts about some of the world's most horrific diseases: the warning signs, the consequences, treatments, and most compellingly, what it feels like to make medical and ethical decisions that can mean the difference between life and death.

Unfailingly precise, calmly instructive, and absolutely engrossing, *The Woman with the Worm in Her Head* offers both useful information and enjoyable reading.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

As a "bugs and drugs doc," Pamela Nagami has seen some of the worst diseases known to humankind--flesh-eating strep, parasitic worms that zigzag through the brain, and AIDS, the biggest infectious disease emergency around. Some of the infections profiled in *Maneater* can smolder for years before rearing up and killing their unsuspecting human host; others seem innocuous, like chickenpox, which can nevertheless devastate a body. Others, like malaria, travel from other countries, but equally dangerous microbes live in American soil, just waiting to be disturbed by a backhoe or a runner and inhaled in a single breath. These indelible dispatches from the frontlines of infectious disease reveal the danger lurking in everything from salads to the air we breathe, the heroic actions of doctors faced with these bizarre cases on a daily basis, and the limits of medical miracles. Like a detective unraveling a crime scene, Nagami shows us how the most innocuous actions can hurt us, or save our lives. --*Lesley Reed*

Review

"Nagami zooms in like a microscope on infections. She presents them, with all their drama, in the context of how they alter patients' and doctors' lives. Along the way, she conveys an amazing amount of medical information that's easy to absorb. Using her sharp storytelling skills, she illustrates for us how vulnerable we all are to microscopic intruders and how having the right doctor on our side can mean the difference between living and becoming another statistic in the morbidity reports." ?*Jane E. Allen, Los Angeles Times*

"In the tradition of *Microbe Hunters*, *The Woman with a Worm in Her Head* is a fascinating account of a physician's struggles on behalf of her patients against the terrifying underworld of infectious diseases. Dr. Nagami is a compelling writer whose insatiable curiosity about bacteria and viruses never comes at the expense of those who suffer from them." ?*Frank Huyler, M.D., author of The Blood of Strangers*

"*The Woman with a Worm in Her Head* brings us the excitement of the fight against infections, the human drama that surrounds their impact, and helps us understand how to avoid them. The reader will be swept up in the detective story behind finding the culprits and the human story that surrounds each case. This book successfully explores the interface between the sick patient and the all-too-human physician who comes with implacable weapons of modern medical technology, but more important, her own feelings, strengths, and weaknesses." ?*C.J. Peters, M.D., author of Virus Hunter*

"A physician of great medical skills and writing talent . . . Nagami, in her fine book, conveys her humanness, warmth, and caring concern as a physician, and as a person. She helps reestablish our faith in medical practice. After reading *The Woman with a Worm in Her Head*, at the first sign of microbial invasion you would want to call her to take care of you. I know I would." ?*Robert S. Desowitz, Ph.D., author of The Malaria Capers*

"[In *The Woman with a Worm in Her Head*] the vigor of hope is preserved, even in the face of the final incapacity. The depth of a humane vision is maintained to the end. The physician's own failings and shortcomings (for there is a limit to medical skills, despite the much-vaunted progress) are made into a route of escape from a ruinous sense of superiority . . . We all enjoy the physician's chronicle of the mighty struggle. It is a war that concerns us all, whose episodes are always fascinating. All the more so when told, as in these pages directly, truthfully, and clearly, by a front-line veteran." ?*F. Gonzalez-Crussi, M.D., Emeritus*

Professor of Pathology (from the foreword to Maneater)

“Gripping . . . clear and engaging . . . if you can stand excursions into the gut-wrenching, high-risk precincts of medical science, you will read and enjoy this from beginning to end.” *Arno Karlen, The Washington Post*

From the Publisher

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW DOES KILL US. Outbreaks of mad cow disease, salmonella, e-coli, or some other tainting organisms make you wonder whether the double cheeseburger you just ate will be your last. The debate continues over genetically engineered food and animal feed made with the body parts of other animals. Mysterious flesh-eating infections, the threat of germ warfare, and newly discovered viruses are alarming and leave you wondering when and where the next biodisaster will appear.

Would you willingly expose yourself to a contagious and life-threatening disease, or voluntarily become intimate with the smell of a staph infection (mousy, musty, rancid) or the tell-tale odor of pus? Meet Pamela Nagami, M.D. In her world, these things are common occurrences. She is an authority on infectious diseases, and in *Maneater and Other True Stories of a Life in Infectious Diseases* (Renaissance Books, \$24.95, November 2001) she chronicles stories that will shock, amaze, and alert readers.

When Danielle Jordan innocently ordered a salad for lunch in Puerto Vallarta she had no idea she had just become the “host” to an organism that six years later would grow into a worm and burrow into her brain.

Charlie Blair caught chickenpox, but he wasn't a kid, he was an adult, and that common childhood disease can attack a man and ravage his body until he looks like a third-degree burn victim.

The patients in *Maneater* are ordinary Americans. They contracted “flesh-eating strep” and meningococcal disease in places they go every day. Infectious diseases are global and democratic, but we can learn from the case histories of those who have already become victims. *Maneater* will take readers on rounds with Dr. Nagami. They will learn from a safe distance what the diseases are, what it's like to be a medical detective, and how it feels to make the medical and ethical decisions that can mean the difference between life and death.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Maureen Perdue:

Spent a free the perfect time to be fun activity to complete! A lot of people spent their spare time with their family, or their own friends. Usually they carrying out activity like watching television, about to beach, or picnic within the park. They actually doing ditto every week. Do you feel it? Do you wish to something different to fill your own free time/ holiday? Can be reading a book could be option to fill your cost-free time/ holiday. The first thing you will ask may be what kinds of reserve that you should read. If you want to try out look for book, may be the book untitled *The Woman with a Worm in Her Head: And Other True Stories of Infectious Disease* can be great book to read. May be it may be best activity to you.

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Elizabeth Bello:

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