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## Perspective

## The Next Epidemic — Lessons from Ebola

Bill Gates

N Engl J Med 2015; 372:1381-1384 | [April 9, 2015](#) | DOI: 10.1056/NEJMp1502918[Comments](#) open through April 15, 2015Share: [f](#) [t](#) [g+](#) [in](#) [+](#)[Article](#)[References](#)[Citing Articles \(7\)](#)[Comments \(3\)](#)

Perhaps the only good news from the tragic Ebola epidemic in Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia is that it may serve as a wake-up call: we must prepare for future epidemics of diseases that may spread more effectively than Ebola. There is a significant chance that an epidemic of a substantially more infectious disease will occur sometime in the next 20 years; after all, we saw major epidemics during the 20th century, including the Spanish influenza epidemic of 1918–1919 and the ongoing pandemic of human immunodeficiency virus. In fact, of all the things that could kill more than 10 million people around the world, the most likely is an epidemic stemming from either natural causes or bioterrorism.

Ebola is far from the most infectious known disease. Other disease agents (measles and influenza, for example) are far more infectious because they can be spread through the air, rather than requiring direct contact. People may not even be aware that they are infected or infectious. Since a person carrying one of these pathogens can infect many strangers in a marketplace or on an airplane, the number of cases can escalate very quickly.

## Audio Interview



Interview with Dr. Nicole Lurie on the lessons learned from the Ebola epidemic and how to prepare for future global disease threats. (14:19)

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