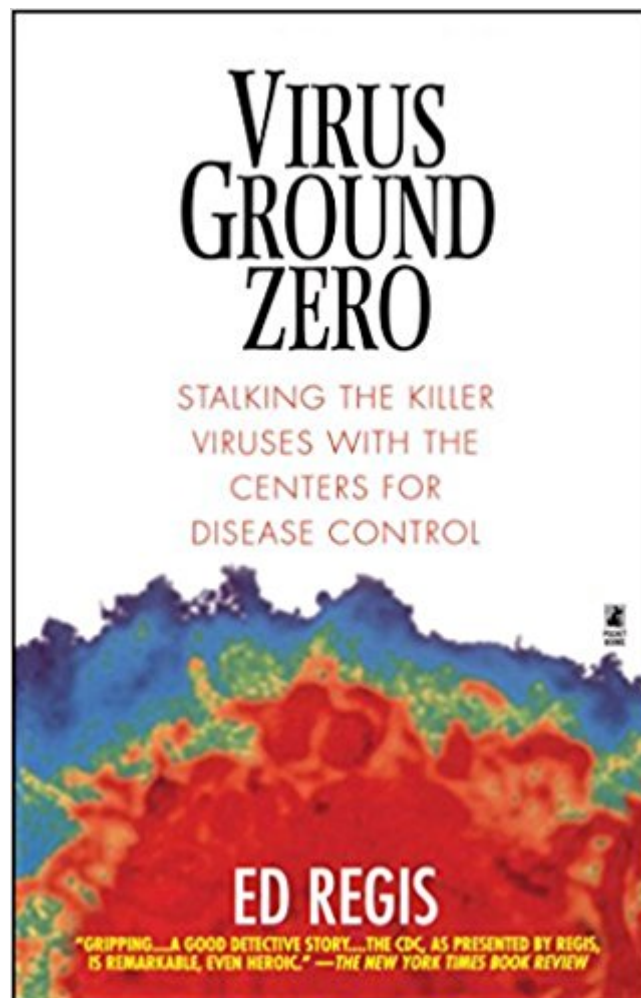




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# Virus Ground Zero: Stalking The Killer Viruses With The Centers For Disease Control



## Synopsis

An acclaimed science writer takes readers behind the scenes at the Centers for Disease Control to tell the story of an engrossing odyssey across the viral frontier.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Beginning in September, I began reading Ground Zero for an Honors English class. It took me about a month and a half to finish, due to its complicated plot and many distracting short story arcs. I spent most of my time reading the novel in class for ten-minute increments or on a calm autumn evening. The novel is very complicated, for example, many times I would have to re-read pages in order to comprehend the situation the novel is describing. I would recommend this for mostly advanced readers, but if epidemiology and the CDC interest you, this is the book for you. Whenever I began to read Ground Zero it would almost always be after I watched the evening news, which often described the events occurring in Sierra Leone regarding the Ebola virus. The novel is centered around the Ebola virus and how the CDC stalks the virus, which made it easier to relate too. For example, even though this book didn't help with my fears about the virus (it often described the horrible symptoms which lead to a horrible certain death) it did educate me on how the virus spread and the necessary precautions to take to prevent infection. When I neared the end of the book, most of the Ebola propaganda began to fade, which made it much easier to really enjoy the book. Ground Zero was a proper sized novel with frightening imagery, disturbing content, and factual information regarding the 1996 Ebola outbreak in the town

of Kikwit. I recall being disgusted quite frequently while reading, for example, when the novel described the many patients foul appearance—once they contracted the virus. Reading this novel definitely changes your perspective on living in a first world country compared to a third world country where many resources are limited. In the future when I remember the book I will think of the Ebola outbreak, which occurred here in 2014. I will recall the panic and widespread fear it caused many American citizens. This nonfiction novel really does have an effect on all its readers, be prepared to feel ashamed for living a cushy lifestyle. The novel does not present many symbols or tones, but it really does affect your emotions. It may seem more of a research novel, but it projects a tragic movie through the articulate words of a few inexperienced epidemiologists and virologists. After examining the novel I would give it the final rating of 4 out of 5 stars. It is truly worth your while to read this; prepare to not be able to put this amazing novel down. Max E.

An enjoyable book providing entry level information into the topics of viral outbreaks and the CDC. There is a well developed section on the background of the United States' Centers for Disease Control, and a refreshing perspective on the reality of the battle against the "killer microbes." Not an intense review of virology, but a fun easy to understand overview of the Ebola epidemic and other associated viral outbreaks.

This book traces the response of the CDC to an Ebola outbreak in Zaire in 1995. Like its predecessor, *The Hot Zone*, many stories are interwoven throughout the book to give a complete background into what happened. Despite this stylistic similarity, the message of this book is quite different from that of *The Hot Zone*, as becomes more and more clear by the end of the book. One of the main story lines is a description of the development of the CDC, from its start as an anti-malaria organization to the multi-faceted behemoth that it is today. After reading the descriptions of the Level 4 labs in *The Hot Zone*, I never would have guessed at the primitive lab conditions found at the CDC through the 1960s and later. Regis' core message is that of victory—victory over this particular outbreak, victory over small pox, and the tremendous success we have had combating infectious illnesses during the twentieth century. He points out that so many infections can be prevented by simple hygiene, like washing one's hands, or by avoiding direct physical contact with infected people by using rubber gloves. Even the much feared Ebola virus doesn't spread easily when people follow standard hygiene protocols common in the developed world. Regis doesn't dismiss the importance of paying attention to communicable diseases and preventing epidemics,

but he argues that there is no need to live in fear about new rain forest microbes out to get us.

Virus Ground Zero: Stalking the Killer Viruses with the Centers for Disease Control attempts to use the 1995 Kikwit Ebola epidemic as a case study for an examination of humanity's struggle with deadly viral and bacteriological pathogens. Ultimately, however, Virus Ground Zero turns out to be a lightweight read bogged down by two agendas: act as a cheerleader for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) specifically and science in general, and serve as a polemic against Laurie Garrett's The Coming Plague. Despite the recent (November 2000) announcement of a possible breakthrough in the development of an Ebola vaccine, Regis' 'Rah! Rah!' routine for science and its ability to protect us, specifically against threats like Ebola, does not quite ring true. His attack on the near apocalyptic conclusions suggested by viral doomsayer's like Laurie Garrett, for example, is based more on the deconstruction of their semantics than convincing evidence. Ed Regis brings impressive credentials to what the Washington Post Book World calls "A readable-even fun-book." A philosophy professor and College Fellow at Western Maryland College, Regis has written and reviewed science books for years. One would think that such a background would have produced a more useful text than Virus Ground Zero.

It's almost impossible to imagine that an author of a book about stalking killer viruses would spend more time on how the Center for Disease Control (CDC) numbers its buildings and on a CDC water bill from the Zairian government than on the AIDs epidemic, but that's what Ed Regis does in his boring and tedious book. Virus Ground Zero is filled with details of the bureaucratic ins and outs of the CDC and spliced like an MTV video--the author can't sustain a story line for more than two pages without jumping 10 or 20 or 30 years back into the past. Because of the structure, there is little character development. A painful read. Do yourself a favor and try Plagues and Peoples by William McNeill instead.

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