NEW YORK CITY

CAUSE

VIBRIO CHOLERAE BACTERIA

SYMPTOMS

dehydration and death

Profuse vomiting and diarrhea leading to

TRANSMISSION

Gastrointestinal; usually contracted from contaminated food or water

NUMBER OF SICK OR DEAD

PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGY

Isolation and quarantine of all cases

Two million deaths worldwide; in New York City there were 11 cases and 9 deaths; there were 44 deaths at the New York quarantine station and an additional 76 aboard ships en route to New York Harbor

SCAPEGOATS

Several thousand Russian Jewish immigrants were quarantined at Hoffman and Swinburne Islands, near Staten Island. Several hundred first-class cabin passengers were restricted to the Surf Hotel on Fire Island

Chinese immigrants; many protested and some brought successful legal suits against mandatory vaccination laws

DISEASE

BUBONIC PLAGUE

LOCATION

SAN FRANCISCO

CAUSE

YERSINIA PESTIS BACTERIA

SYMPTOMS

High fever, intense muscle pain and headaches, fatigue and bloody vomiting, followed by swollen and painful lymph nodes

TRANSMISSION Fleas carried by rats

PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGY

Quarantine and forced vaccinations in Chinatown

NUMBER OF SICK OR DEAD

By 1904 there had been 121 cases and 113 deaths; of the dead 107 were Chinese, 4 were Japanese and 2 were Caucasian

DISEASE

TYPHUS FEVER

LOCATION

CAUSE

RICKETTSIA PROWAZEKII

EL PASO, TEX.

SYMPTOMS

SCAPEGOATS

Extremely high fever, joint and muscle pain, delirium, reddish-purple rash spreading from the chest; 20 percent to 40 percent of victims died in the years before antibiotics

Isolation of the ill and quarantine of those with contact with them. Intensive medical inspections at the Texas-Mexico border; kerosene disinfecting baths for all Mexicans crossing the border

TRANSMISSION

SCAPEGOATS

Body lice carrying rickettsia bite humans; when they scratch themselves, tainted feces enter the bloodstream

NUMBER OF SICK OR DEAD

PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGY

Three cases

Thousands of Mexican day workers crossing the border were subjected to daily kerosene baths; in one case an explosion occurred, killing 28 men and severely burning 25 to 30 more

DISEASE

SPANISH INFLUENZA

LOCATION

WORLDWIDE

CAUSE

INFLUENZA VIRUS (A/H1N1)

SYMPTOMS

Fever, cough, fatigue, chills, possibly progressing to pneumonia; in severe cases, patients suffocate as their lungs fill up with fluid

TRANSMISSION Respiratory; highly contagious and easily spread

NUMBER OF SICK OR DEAD

Estimated at 650,000 deaths in the U.S., and 25 million to 100 million worldwide

SCAPEGOATS Pandemic was too widespread for any one group to be blamed

PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGY

Widespread closings of schools and public places and prohibitions against public gatherings; orders to keep mass transit and buildings well ventilated; isolation and quarantine in some communities

DISEASE

SMALLPOX

LOCATION

NEW YORK CITY

CAUSE

VARIOLA MAJOR VIRUS

SYMPTOMS

Fever, headache, severe fatigue, severe backache and malaise, followed by rash that turns to blisters; 30 percent or more infected die

TRANSMISSION

Respiratory or physical contact with infected person; highly contagious

NUMBER OF SICK OR DEAD

Three cases

PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGY

Vaccination of all who had contact with the ill, followed by general public vaccination

There was not enough vaccine produced for

every American, causing panic among those

DISEASE

LOCATION

CAUSE

POLIO

NATIONWIDE

POLIOVIRUS

6 52

1976

9

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SYMPTOMS

Fever, sore throat, headache, vomiting, fatigue, pain or stiffness of neck, back, arms or legs, muscle spasms; in serious cases, paralysis and death

TRANSMISSION

Gastrointestinal; victims ingest the virus, which infects the lymphatic glands and nerves until it reaches the spinal cord and possibly brain

PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGY

SCAPEGOATS

turned away

Social distancing measures like canceling summer camps for children and closing public pools. (The Salk polio vaccine was not widely distributed until 1955.) Children of upper socio-economic classes contracted polio out of proportion to poorer children who had developed antibodies through low-level exposure to the virus in unclean drinking water

NUMBER OF SICK OR DEAD

Approximately 58,000 cases and 3,145 deaths, primarily children

SCAPEGOATS

None

DISEASE

SWINE FLU

LOCATION

FORT DIX, N.J.

CAUSE

INFLUENZA VIRUS (A/H1N1)

SYMPTOMS

Fever, cough, fatigue, chills, possibly progressing to pneumonia

TRANSMISSION Respiratory

PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGY

Isolation and quarantine of ill soldiers and their contacts at Fort Dix; some 40 million vaccinations given to civilians. After the vaccination program there was an increase of Guillain-Barré syndrome, a neurological disorder causing paralysis. Scientists still debate whether there was a connection

One death and fewer than 200 confirmed cases

NUMBER OF SICK OR DEAD

SCAPEGOATS

The government officials involved in the widespread vaccination program; the head of the Centers for Disease Control lost his job and President Gerald Ford was accused of using the crisis for political gain

DISEASE

H.I.V./AIDS

LOCATION

SAN FRANCISCO/LOS ANGELES/ **NEW YORK, THEN A GLOBAL** PANDEMIC

CAUSE

HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS

SYMPTOMS

Fever, headaches, swollen lymph glands and weight loss; in time, damage to the immune system leads to a host of illnesses including tuberculosis, meningitis and cancers, and eventually death

Public health education, safer sexual practices,

PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGY

scrutiny of the blood-banking system, needle exchange programs

TRANSMISSION

Sexual activity, blood transfusions, needle sharing among drug abusers, blood exchange between mother and baby during pregnancy, breastfeeding

NUMBER OF SICK OR DEAD More than 32 million people

have died worldwide; 33 million others are now infected

SCAPEGOATS Gay men,

intravenous drug abusers, Haitians

DISEASE

SARS

AND SOUTH AMERICA AND EUROPE

SARS CORONA VIRUS

SYMPTOMS

High fever, headache, chills, malaise, coughing, possibly severe pneumonia

NUMBER OF SICK OR DEAD

PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGY

8,427 cases, 916 deaths worldwide; 74 probable cases in the United States (one health worker; all others had traveled to SARS-afflicted areas abroad)

Hong Kong, Canada and Singapore

Chinese government concealed the outbreak

for several months, helping the disease to

spread; quarantine and isolation policies in

LOCATION

FIRST IN ASIA, THEN NORTH

CAUSE

TRANSMISSION Respiratory

SCAPEGOATS

Asians and those who had traveled to affected parts of Asia. University of California at Berkeley briefly banned Asian students from visiting the campus