How will we cope with the next global infectious disease epidemic?

Throughout history, nations have waged war against epidemics, from bubonic plague to pulmonary tuberculosis. Today, we confront HIV/AIDS, SARS, and avian influenza, among other major infectious diseases. The failure to contain HIV/AIDS, the longest contemporary pandemic, and the difficulties in dealing with the threat posed by avian influenza, show that the world is not well prepared for the next health crises. Because preventing and controlling these infectious diseases is a race against time, scientists around the world scrutinize viruses and bacteria more intently than ever. Yet while scientific advances are crucial, they are insufficient.

This timely book addresses the urgent need to study the governance of infectious disease epidemics, and argues that the battle must be fought on two fronts, simultaneously. The first is within the laboratory; the second is located in a wider social context that involves ordinary individuals, groups, communities, legislators, and the state. Research by medical sociologists and other social scientists indicates that many factors influence people’s behavior and, in turn, the level of success in preventing and containing an infectious disease epidemic.

Using Asia as a case study, Crisis Preparedness discusses the inadequacies of current preventive and management approaches to deal with epidemics. The distinguished international contributors to this volume present perspectives from the fields of social science, epidemiology, and public health, and collectively seek to answer the pressing question: How can we prepare for the next global epidemic?
ABSTRACT

Throughout history, nations have waged war against epidemics, from bubonic plague to pulmonary tuberculosis. Today, we confront HIV/AIDS, SARS, and avian influenza, among other major infectious diseases. The failure to contain HIV/AIDS, the longest contemporary pandemic, and the difficulties in dealing with the threat posed by avian influenza, show that the world is not well prepared for the next health crises. Because preventing and controlling these infectious diseases is a race against time, scientists around the world scrutinize viruses and bacteria more intently than ever. Yet while scientific advances are crucial, they are insufficient. This timely book addresses the urgent need to study the governance of infectious disease epidemics, and argues that the battle must be fought on two fronts, simultaneously. The first is within the laboratory; the second is located in a wider social context that involves ordinary individuals, groups, communities, legislators, and the state. Research by medical sociologists and other social scientists indicates that many factors influence people’s behavior and, in turn, the level of success in preventing and containing an infectious disease epidemic. Using Asia as a case study, Crisis Preparedness discusses the inadequacies of current preventive and management approaches to deal with epidemics. The distinguished international contributors to this volume present perspectives from the fields of social science, epidemiology, and public health, and collectively seek to answer the pressing question: How can we prepare for the next global epidemic?

The seven chapters of the book address this question in three stages: first, an introduction of the main features of the governance of epidemics, second, country case studies that illustrate the situation; and third, macro-level analyzes of two dimensions of governance. The introductory stage comprises two chapters: Chapter 1 “Governance of Epidemics: Is There a Reason for Concern?” by Stella R. Quah provides basic conceptual and historical background to the discussion of governance of epidemics; and Chapter 2 “The Global Governance of Epidemics: Possibilities and Limitations” by Jim Whitman analyses the challenges and limitations of global governance. The second stage involves detailed analyses of selected case studies: Myanmar (Burma) in Chapter 3 “Responding to Epidemic Disease Threats in Burma and Lessons for China: Why Good Governance Matters” by Chris Beyrer; India and Thailand in Chapter 4 “Global and Local Strategies against HIV/AIDS in South and Southeast Asia: The Cases of India and Thailand” by Graham Scambler; and Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam in Chapter 5 “Taming the Tiger: The Success and Failure of HIV/AIDS Policies in Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and China” by Kari Hartwig. All of these chapters employ a comparative approach, contrasting their main country cases with the situation in other countries, including China. The book’s third stage is an analytical discussion of the overall governance of epidemics from two angles. Chapter 6 “On Trust and Health Consensus-building in the Governance of Epidemics” by Stella R. Quah, examines the dynamic roles of governments and citizens from a sociological perspective, whereas Chapter 7 “Global Public Health Research Preparedness against Emerging and Reemerging Infectious Diseases” by Gabriel M. Leung addresses the role of research epidemiologists in sharing and advancing knowledge on infectious diseases.