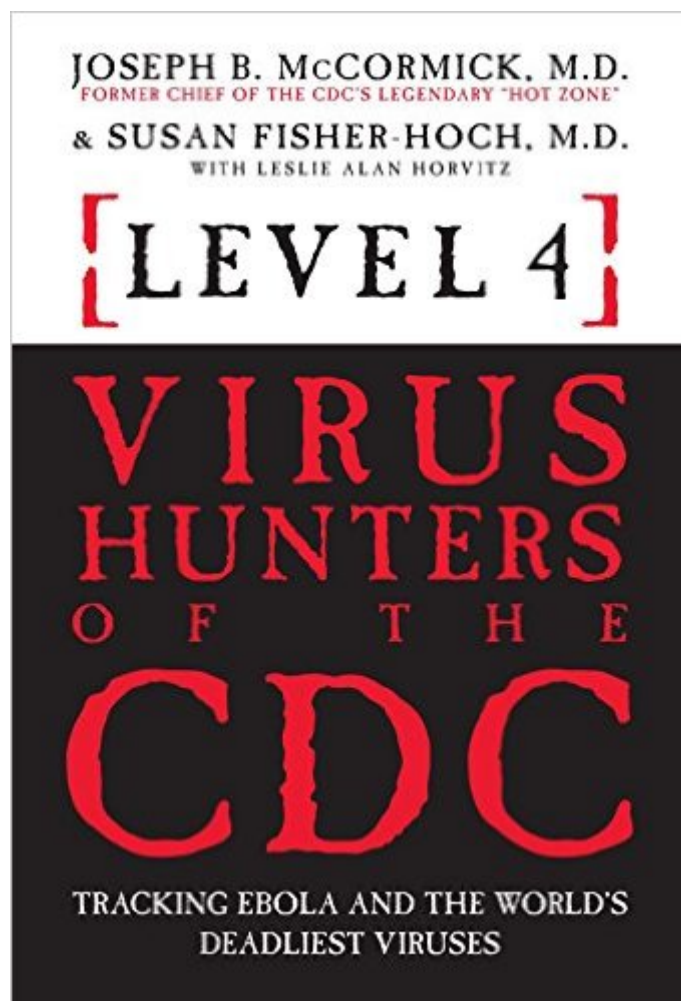


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# Level 4: Virus Hunters Of The CDC - Tracking Ebola And The World's Deadliest Viruses



## Synopsis

"Level 4 is the highest degree of laboratory containment for isolation and experimentation on microbiological organisms. Level-4 organisms produce lethal illnesses in humans and, for the most part, have no treatment and no prevention. Among the most infamous are Ebola and Lassa." "from Level 4 Virus Hunters of the CDC With the recent outbreaks of Ebola, and its arrival on American shores, more and more people have become aware and frightened of this lethal virus. Husband-and-wife team Dr. Joseph B. McCormick and Dr. Susan Fisher-Hoch journey through equatorial Africa, Brazil's ghettos and rainforests, and settlements in northern Pakistan in search of those already infected by these killers. Filled with scientific knowledge, Level 4 explains how and why these viruses are so deadly and how we can prevent further devastating epidemics from breaking out.

## Book Information

Paperback: 400 pages

Publisher: Sterling (January 6, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1454916656

ISBN-13: 978-1454916659

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 1.1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars See all reviews (37 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #90,959 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 in Books > Medical Books > Basic Sciences > Virology #2660 in Books > Textbooks > Science & Mathematics #8398 in Books > Science & Math

## Customer Reviews

Biologic agents, viruses, and the weapons they can be used with, have become common themes for movies and books. The Centers For Disease Control in Atlanta Georgia has also become a frequently mentioned locale as the HIV Virus grew in scope, and with it the public's concern. The accounts of some of these Viruses seemed almost like science fiction, as the descriptions I read often seemed on the edge of hyperbole. This volume by two "virus hunters" is eminently readable by the layperson as it explains the basics about, what a virus is, how they spread, and how horrible the consequences of infection can be. Dr. Joseph B. McCormick and Dr Susan Fisher-Hoch are as amazing as people as the diseases they pursue. These doctors when in the field often perform tests

that would normally only be performed in a Level 4 Laboratory. This is a facility that is isolated, at times in a separate building, includes airlocks, and the researchers wear the pressurized suits movies have portrayed. Level 4 is as high as it goes, or perhaps better stated, Level 4 is where the most lethal, dangerous, and exotic agents are to be worked with. These Doctors however will work with these same agents in a tent or in the open, in the most primitive conditions where the tiniest of errors could mean their death. As a reference point I went to the Centers For Disease Control website to see where HIV is placed on the 1-4 scale. HIV except for certain circumstances is handled in a Level 2 environment. This put into perspective for me just how incredibly violent and lethal are the agents these people deal with. The book gives a great deal of background on HIV from the earliest days it was identified.

I'm a scientist with some epidemiology experience and fascinated by viruses in general. Having read and loved *The Coming Plague* (Garrett), I was very interested to read more of the inside story of some of the scientists she'd profiled in her various chapters. I read the intro and understood that this book was written by two authors, Joe McCormick and Sue Fisher-Hoch, so I wasn't surprised when the book began at a good, interest-sustaining clip, then suddenly changed "voices" to transition from Joe's more flowing, factual but compassionate and very readable voice to Sue's more strident and complaint-ridden narrative. I struggled very hard to like Susan as an author and a person (I'm fascinated by autobiographies by other women in science) but here I completely failed. While the portions of the story she wrote detailed the science itself in an interesting way, the narrative that described her thoughts, feelings and beliefs became increasingly more offensive. At certain points I was fairly appalled by her lack of sensitivity for the patients and doctors in the cultures in which she was immersed. Continuous complaints, finger-pointing and accusations became very hard to read, especially when followed by her characterization of herself as the only thinking person, the heroine, the single voice of reason in a sea of greed, ignorance and "politics", even within the CDC and most certainly on other continents. For instance, she characterized poor village doctors operating out of a simple hut who expected payment for injections as "only interested in their bottom line!" Which is fairly insane considering the doctors are as often not paid and certainly struggling for their own existence.

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