

Book and movie 2

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



The Pneumonic plague In “ Panic in the Streets”, director Elia Kazan uses characters in her 1950 production to depict procedures health service employees undertake when handling communicable diseases. Prior training proves useful in their implementation of containment measures before the rampant spread of disease-causing microorganisms within a given population. In addition, it furnishes personnel with the ability to think critically through situations. For example, Richard Widmark’s character Clint Reed is acutely aware that prematurely warning New Orleans’ citizens about the pneumonic plague would trigger irrational fear and force those infected into hiding whereby, they would go on long vacations further spreading the disease (Kazan). Tony Hillerman’s “ The First Eagle”, concurs with Elia’s representation of communicable diseases; however, his focus is on “ Black death” (contracting the pneumonic plague from exposure to infected dead tissue). Communicable diseases are highly contagious, which necessitates timely and adequate containment before an outbreak that indiscriminately attacks the population (CDC). Discussed below is transmission, shift in vector location, and pollution spread of the bacterium that causes the pneumonic plague as portrayed in Elia Kazan’s film and Hillerman’s novel.

Kazan’s movie reveals that some pathogens remain active in dead tissues (corpses), which have not undergone proper sanitization procedures aimed at suppressing the pathogens viability or infectious nature. The pneumonic plague, which represents the disease featured in the movie is one such example. Research by the Center for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) identifies *Yersinia pestis* as the bacterium responsible for causing the pneumonic plague. The disease attacks the respiratory system aggressively.

Transmission of the disease occurs either from human to human or from animals to humans. Transmission through the former (primary transmission) occurs when a non-infected person inhales air exhaled by an infected person or when a non-infected person is exposed to infected dead tissue.

Conversely, animal to human transmission occurs when a non-infected individual eats an infected animal or is exposed to fleas on the infected animal; for example, a 2006 World Health Organization (WHO) study revealed that pneumonic plague infection in Northwest China resulted from human contact with fleas from infected animals during hunting expeditions (CDC). “Black Death”, is the name given to transmission of the pneumonic plague while skinning game. The Navajo tribe in Hillerman’s novel became infected with the pneumonic plague after exposure to the fleas on the infected animals they hunted for food (Hillerman 20).

Migration patterns are responsible for the shift in vectors, which spread the pathogens in different regions. Rats and marmots are the most common vectors that carry and transmit the bacterium responsible for causing the pneumonic plague. Inoculation soon after contact with an infected human, animal or dead tissue proves useful in the successful treatment of the pneumonic plague (CDC). In the movie, Reed inoculated all the people that encountered the infected corpse, and joined forces with law enforcement agents to track down people that had close contact with the deceased prior and after his death (Kazan). Failure to receive immediate medical intervention results in fatality in less than 48 hours. This explains why law enforcements agents in the film expedited the manhunt by threatening to withhold early treatment from suspects exposed to the infected victim

(Kazan).

In conclusion, prevention of a communicable disease outbreak proves to be the only efficient method of containing the disease. Skilled personnel trained in tracing the source of pathogens, assessing rate of infection within the population, and implementing containment procedures play a pivotal role in preventing catastrophic outbreaks of diseases likely to result in high fatalities. The success of their work hinges on cooperation of all involved parties such as law enforcement officers and the general population (CDC).

Works Cited

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