



# Viruses: A Very Short Introduction

*Dorothy H. Crawford*

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## **Viruses: A Very Short Introduction** Dorothy H. Crawford

In recent years, the world has witnessed dramatic outbreaks of such dangerous viruses such as HIV, Hanta, swine flu, SARS, and Lassa fever. In this *Very Short Introduction*, eminent biologist and popular science writer Dorothy Crawford offers a fascinating portrait of these infinitesimally small but often highly dangerous creatures. Crawford first relates how viruses were discovered and she unravels the intricate structures of tiny parasites that are by far the most abundant life forms on the planet. Analyzing the threat of viral infections, Crawford recounts stories of renowned killer viruses such as Ebola and rabies as well as the less known bat-borne Nipah and Hendra viruses. She identifies wild animals as the source of the most recent pandemics, detailing the reasons behind the present increase in potentially fatal infections, and evaluating the evidence that suggests that long term viruses can eventually lead to cancer. Finally, Crawford looks to the future to ask whether we can ever live in harmony with viruses, and considers ways to prevent the emergence of new and devastating viruses.

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