Chapter Summaries for

*Adventures of a Female Medical Detective: In Pursuit of Smallpox and AIDS*

by Mary Guinan with Anne Mather

Ch 1 (My First Outbreak): In 1974, for the first time in history, the military requests CDC’s help when an outbreak of life-threatening bacterial blood infections invades the intensive care unit of a large military hospital. Dr. Guinan, on the job at CDC for just 6 weeks, is sent (in the dark of night to the unnamed site)—and solves the outbreak.

Ch 2 (Something to Believe In: Operation Smallpox Zero): Mary goes from being a chemist for a chewing gum factory (she helps develop new flavors) to obtaining a doctorate in physiology at UTMB, Galveston; explores becoming an astronaut at nearby NASA; does post-doc work in hematology at NIH; then goes to medical school at Johns Hopkins; before landing her dream job at CDC—eradicating smallpox.

Ch 3 (The Gift of an Elephant): In a remote area of India, a rich stranger gives Mary an elephant and elephant driver because he had heard of her team’s difficulties getting transportation back and forth across the rivers intersecting the smallpox-infected villages. Mary rides the elephant daily, and it proves a dream addition to the team.

For more information, click here.
Ch4 (Dr. Herpes): At the height of the genital herpes epidemic, Mary’s presentation on oral herpesvirus at a national medical conference is misinterpreted by the media, who incorrectly label her as a genital herpes expert on the CBS Evening News. It is a turning point in her career, and she soon becomes “Dr. Herpes.”

Ch 5 (Healthcare Workers and Enemy Information in a War Zone, Pakistan, 1980) The US State Department requests CDC’s assistance in evaluating the condition of Afghan refugees in Pakistani camps, following Russia’s invasion of Afghanistan. Mary is sent to head up the team, but learns, en route, that the CIA is along for the ride.

Ch 6 (An AIDS Needle-Stick at a Rundown Hotel in San Francisco, 1982). In the first AIDS study, Mary gets stuck with a needle from an HIV-positive patient in San Francisco and two years later develops a lesion that looks like Kaposi’s sarcoma.

Ch 7 (ACT UP Acts Up at CDC over the Definition of AIDS for Women): The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power twice storms CDC headquarters, the second time looking for Mary.

Ch 8 (The HIV-Infected Preacher’s Wife): One of Mary’s early AIDS patient, who gets AIDS from her husband, worries about her children, whom he has molested.
Ch 9 (Few Safe Places): The author recalls the final days of four AIDS patients, whose stories illustrate the suffering of infected gay men in the eighties and nineties, compounded by an unrelenting and vicious homophobia.

Ch 10 (Expert Witness for John Doe, the Pharmacist, 1991): Dr. Guinan is expert witness for an HIV-infected pharmacist denied employment in a landmark decision that decides persons with HIV infection are protected under existing laws preventing employment discrimination on the basis of medical handicaps.

Ch 11 (The Milk Industry Challenges CDC over the Source of a Listeriosis Outbreak): Dr. Guinan leads the CDC response to a formidable challenge from the milk industry over an outbreak of listeriosis linked to pasteurized milk. After numerous intimidating encounters, the milk industry does not move forward with the lawsuit against CDC.

Ch 12 (On Getting AIDS from a Toilet Seat and Other STD Myths and Taboos): The author’s TV quip--that “The only way I know of that you can get AIDS from a toilet seat is if you sit down on it before someone else gets up”—was so infamous a colleague predicted it would be her epitaph. But Guinan insists that the real outrage is that myths persist that punish people with STDs as sinners, not worthy of treatment.