

## New Exhibit at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science Explores the History and Challenges of Fighting Widespread Viruses

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 08, 2021

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ALBUQUERQUE – Just as we are hopefully approaching the final days of the Covid-19 pandemic, a new exhibit opening on July 23 at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science (NMMNHS) looks at how epidemiologists, veterinarians, and other healthcare workers on the front lines have come together in the fight against infectious diseases around the world throughout history.

“Outbreak: Epidemics in a Connected World” debuted at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Influenza of 1918, a pandemic that took the lives of as many as 100 million people. NMMNHS offers a DIY-produced version of this timely exhibit. From the Nipah virus to SARS and HIV, visitors to the Museum will learn how viruses can spread from animals to people, why some outbreaks become epidemics and how people in different disciplines and countries are working together to stop them.

“Outbreak” highlights the human causes of these viruses, such as land-use change, urbanization, and industrialized food production, as well as their consequences for communities, societies, and the global population. When people move into or change an environment, microbes that cause illness can “jump” from wildlife to humans and cause disease outbreaks that can spread internationally. Tracking down and responding to these outbreaks requires coordinated detective work from people in many professions.

Included in the exhibition:

- The origins of zoonotic diseases: Since the rise of domestication, human interactions with other animals have increased and changed. Today, the majority of all new infectious diseases affecting humans originate in animals. By understanding this, it can be seen how they spill over, spread and can be contained.
- Humans' role in spreading animal-borne viruses: Examine the effects of habitat fragmentation and diversity loss, why urbanization and global travel could increase the risks of zoonotic-disease emergence, and how scientific research and behavior change could lower the risks of disease transmission.
- How outbreaks are handled: Future outbreaks are all but certain to occur. Learn about the people who play pivotal roles in the global fight against epidemics, from identifying their animal origins to developing vaccines and interventions to help prevent the next one.

“Outbreak: Epidemics in a Connected World” will be on display through January 2, 2022.

### **About the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science**

*The New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science is a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, under the leadership of the Board of Trustees of the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science. Programs and exhibits are generously supported by the New Mexico Museum of Natural History Foundation, through the generous support of donors. Established in 1986, the mission of the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science is to preserve and interpret the distinctive natural and scientific heritage of our state through extraordinary collections, research, exhibits, and programs designed to ignite a passion for lifelong learning. The NMMNHS offers exhibitions, programs, and workshops in Geoscience, including Paleontology and Mineralogy, Bioscience, and Space Science. It is the Southwest's largest repository for fossils and includes a Planetarium and a large format 3D DynaTheater.*

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