Adolescence is a turbulent period to live through. Marking the transition from the world of childhood to adult life, the adolescent faces many challenges and opportunities, including puberty, cognitive changes, forming their own identity, relating to often conflicting demands from parents and peers, and negotiating first romantic relationships. Adolescence: A Very Short Introduction provides a guide to the classical research that has informed our knowledge on adolescence, as well as the results of modern research into the contemporary adolescent experience. It also examines a number of aspects of adolescence, including the cultural and historical context, the biological changes to the adolescent brain, and the controversies that adolescence brings.

Anaesthesia: A Very Short Introduction examines the modern anaesthetic practice. Anaesthesia is a mysterious and sometimes threatening process. What is anaesthesia? How is it produced? How does it differ from natural sleep and other forms of unconsciousness? Categories of anaesthetic drugs include: anaesthetic vapours, intravenous agents, muscle relaxants, and analgesics. Anaesthetists play a significant role in specialised areas such as intensive care medicine, pain medicine, and childbirth. This VSI looks at what anaesthetists do, how their role has changed over the years, and the risks and side effects of anaesthesia.

Blood: A Very Short Introduction

Chris Cooper
Blood is vital to most animals. In mammals it transports oxygen and food, carries away waste, and contains the white cells that attack invading microbes. Playing a central role in life, blood has profound cultural and historical significance and plays an important role in religious ritual. Blood was one of the four humours in early Western medicine and is still a major diagnostic tool in the doctor’s armoury. Blood: A Very Short Introduction analyses the components of blood, explains blood groups, and looks at transfusions, blood tests, and blood-borne diseases. It considers the future, including the possibility of making artificial blood, and producing blood from stem cells in the laboratory.

Cancer: A Very Short Introduction
Nick James

Cancer: A Very Short Introduction explains, in non-technical language, what cancer is and what it does. Why, despite constant improvements in treatment techniques, has cancer proved to be so hard to tackle? Why does cancer remain one of the largest causes of death worldwide? This VSI examines the different examples of cancer healthcare from around the world. It also investigates the political and economic context to cancer care and examines the trends in diagnosis and treatment of the disease. The future of cancer care and the alternative and complementary approaches to cancer care are also outlined.

Drugs: A Very Short Introduction
Les Iversen

Drugs: A Very Short Introduction provides a non-technical account of how drugs work in the body. The 20th century saw a remarkable upsurge of research on medicinal drugs, with major advances in the treatment of bacterial and viral infections, heart disease, stomach ulcers, cancer, and mental illnesses. These, along with the introduction of the oral contraceptive, have altered all of our lives. There has also been an increase in the recreational use and abuse of drugs in the Western world. This VSI reviews both legal (alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine) and illegal drugs and discusses current ideas about why some are addictive, and whether drug laws need reform.

Epidemiology: A Very Short Introduction
Rodolfo Saracci
Epidemiology: A Very Short Introduction explains what epidemiology is and its importance to the discovery, control, and prevention of disease in world populations. It looks at health hazards identified by the study of epidemiology — such as the relationship between tobacco smoking and lung cancer and between various aspects of diet, environment, and exercise — and the origin and spread of new epidemics. This VSI dispels some of the myths surrounding the study of epidemiology. It explores the principles behind clinical trials and explains the nature of the basic statistics concerning disease. It also considers the ethical and political issues related to obtaining and using information concerning patients and trials involving placebos.

Food: A Very Short Introduction

John Krebs

Food: A Very Short Introduction provides a brief history of man's relationship with food, spanning from the time of our remote ancestors 3 million years ago to the present day. Food has been a topic of great interest for humanity across cultures and over generations. Why do some people like some kinds of foods and not others? How do our senses contribute to flavour? How important are genetics in our likes and dislikes? We are all affected by issues such as diet, nutrition, and health; the disparity between malnutrition in some places and overconsumption in others; obesity; sustainable agriculture; and genetic modification. How will it be possible to feed a population of 9 billion in 2050, without destroying our natural environment?

The History of Medicine: A Very Short Introduction

William Bynum

The History of Medicine: A Very Short Introduction assesses the origins and development of medicine from ancient times, through the scholastic medieval tradition and the Enlightenment, to the present day. A thematic approach is adopted, with key turning points in medical history being examined, such as the advent of hospitals and rise of experimental medicine. Although this VSI focuses primarily on Western medicine, it also explores encounters with alternative traditions such as Chinese and Indian medicine, and modern complementary medicine, while at the same time engaging with contemporary issues, discoveries, and controversies.
HIV & AIDS: A Very Short Introduction
Alan Whiteside

HIV/AIDS: A Very Short Introduction provides an introduction to AIDS—the most serious human epidemic in centuries—tackling the science, politics, demographics, and devastating consequences of the disease. The first case was identified in 1981; by 2004 approximately forty million people were living with the disease, and about twenty million had died. The outlook today is a little brighter. Although HIV/AIDS continues to be a pressing public health issue, the epidemic has stabilized. The worst affected regions are Southern and Eastern Africa. Elsewhere, HIV is found in specific, often marginalized populations. Although there remains no cure for HIV, there have been unprecedented breakthroughs in understanding the disease and developing drugs.

Hormones: A Very Short Introduction
Martin Luck

Hormones balance and coordinate the workings of the body. There are many misconceptions about the endocrine system and few people are aware of its nature and importance. Hormones: A Very Short Introduction explains what hormones are, where they come from, what they do, how they work, and how they evolved. It describes how the endocrine system operates, explaining how hormones regulate water, salt, and calcium in the body, how they affect reproduction and our appetites, and how they help us adjust to different environments, such as travel across time zones. The ethical and moral issues surrounding research methods, testing on animals, and hormone misuse are also considered.

The Immune System: A Very Short Introduction
Paul Klenerman

The Immune System: A Very Short Introduction describes the immune system and how it works in health and disease. It focuses on the human immune system, considering how it evolved, and the basic rules that govern its behaviour. The immune system comprises a series of organs, cells, and chemical messengers that work together as a team to provide defence against infection. These components are discussed along with the critical signals that trigger them and how they exert their protective effects, including innate and adaptive responses. The consequences of too little immunity (immunodeficiency), caused for
example by HIV/AIDS, and too much, leading to auto-immune and allergic diseases, are also considered.

**Infectious Disease: A Very Short Introduction**

**Marta Wayne and Benjamin Bolker**

Infectious disease is a moving target: new diseases emerge every year, old diseases evolve into new forms, and ecological and socioeconomic upheavals change the transmission pathways by which diseases spread. By taking an approach focused on the general evolutionary and ecological dynamics of disease, *Infectious Disease: A Very Short Introduction* considers where particular diseases come from, how they are transmitted from one person to another, why some individuals are more susceptible than others, and what strategies can be used to combat these diseases. It explains the general principles of infection, the management of outbreaks, and the evolutionary and ecological approaches that are now central to much research about infectious disease.

**Madness: A Very Short Introduction**

**Andrew Scull**

Madness: A Very Short Introduction examines the social, cultural, medical, and artistic responses to mental disturbance across more than two millennia, Madness is something that frightens and fascinates us all. It is a word with which we are universally familiar, and a condition that haunts the human imagination. Through the centuries, it has been a theme of poetry and prose, drama and the visual arts. A whole industry has grown up, devoted to its management and suppression. Madness profoundly disturbs our common-sense assumptions; threatens the social order, both symbolically and practically; creates almost unbearable disruptions in the texture of daily living; and turns our experience and our expectations upside down.

**Molecular Biology: A Very Short Introduction**

**Aysha Divan and Janice Royds**

Molecular biology is the story of the molecules of life, their relationships, and how these interactions are controlled. Its applications are wide and growing; the power of molecular biology can now be harnessed to treat diseases, solve crimes, map human history, and
produce genetically modified organisms and crops. Starting with the building blocks established by Darwin, Wallace, and Mendel, and the discovery of the structure of DNA in 1953, Molecular Biology: A Very Short Introduction considers the wide range of applications for molecular biology today, including the development of new drugs and DNA fingerprinting, and looks forward to two key areas of evolving research: personalized medicine and synthetic biology.

Nutrition: A Very Short Introduction
David Bender

Nutrition is a topic of wide interest and importance. In spite of a growing understanding of the underlying biochemistry, and health campaigns such as ‘five-a-day’, increasing obesity and reported food allergies and eating disorders, as well as the widely advertised ‘supposed’ benefits of food supplements mean that a clear explanation of the basic principles of a healthy diet are vital. Nutrition: A Very Short Introduction explains the basic elements of food, the balance between energy intake and exercise, the problems of over- and under-nutrition, and raises the question of the safety of nutritional supplements.

Pandemics: A Very Short Introduction
Christian W. McMillen

The 2014 Ebola epidemic demonstrated the power of pandemics and their ability not only to destroy lives locally but also to capture imaginations worldwide. Pandemics: A Very Short Introduction provides a concise yet comprehensive account of pandemics throughout human history, illustrating the ways in which pandemic disease—including plague, tuberculosis, malaria, smallpox, cholera, influenza, and HIV/AIDS—has shaped history and how human history has shaped pandemic disease. By considering the explosion of medical research and the varying state responses, such as quarantine and travel restrictions, this Very Short Introduction shows why pandemics are both interesting from a medical standpoint and provide insight into the culture and politics of their time.

Plague: A Very Short Introduction
Paul Slack
Plague: A Very Short Introduction explores the historical impact of plague over the centuries, focusing on how people coped with the disease and how governments fought it. It examines the impact of plague on settlements, local histories, and art and literature. Plague was responsible for the Black Death of 1348 and the Great Plague of London in 1665, as well as for devastating epidemics much earlier and much later. The impact of plague on modern notions of public health is examined and its presence in powerful images in art and literature is discussed.

Psychiatry: A Very Short Introduction
Tom Burns

Psychiatry: A Very Short Introduction explores the nature of psychiatry, focusing on what it can and cannot do, and discussing why its history has been beset by dramatic shifts in emphasis and types of treatment. Considering the main disorders that have shaped its practice (such as schizophrenia and manic depression), it analyses how it differs from (and overlaps with) psychology and psychotherapy. Discussing philosophical issues of psychiatry’s legitimacy, this VSI explores the mistakes psychiatry has made and the blind alleys in its history, before looking forward to the problems associated with ageing populations and the likely changes in its practice with the coming of artificial intelligence and virtual reality.

Public Health: A Very Short Introduction
Virginia Berridge

Public Health: A Very Short Introduction explores the areas that fall under the remit of public health, and explains how the individual histories of different countries have come to cause great differences in the perception of the role and responsibilities of public health organizations. In its narrowest sense, public health can refer to the health of a population, the longevity of individual members, and their freedom from disease, but it can also be anticipatory, geared to the prevention of illness, rather than simply the provision of care and treatment. Drawing on wide-ranging international examples, this VSI demonstrates the central role of history in understanding the amorphous nature of public health today.

Human Anatomy: A Very Short Introduction
Leslie Klenerman
Knowledge of the basic construction of the human body—the skeleton, the organs of the chest and abdomen, the nervous system, the head and neck with its sensory systems and anatomy for breathing and swallowing—is vital for anyone studying medicine, biology, and health studies. Human Anatomy: A Very Short Introduction provides a clear, concise, and accessible introduction to the structure, function, and main systems of the human body, including a number of clear and simple illustrations to explain the key areas. Some aspects of human evolution are also considered to show how and why the human body has developed as it has.