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Snakebite!: Antivenom and a Global Health Crisis

Jennifer Haltli

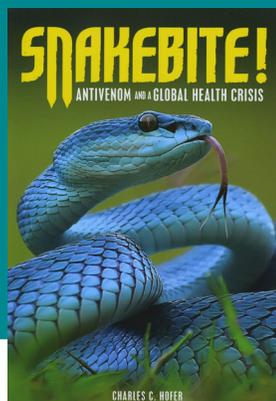
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Book Review

Snakebite!: Antivenom and a Global Health Crisis

Author

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Reviewer

Jennifer Haltli

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Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

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Pages

104

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2019

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Twenty-First Century
Books

One million people suffer from snake bites annually. Over 100,000 of them die, mostly in the eastern hemisphere. With 680 species of venomous snakes residing on all habitable continents, the antivenom crisis is global. The major economic barrier to antivenom is that the countries with the most desperate need are the very same countries that cannot afford it. Consequently, bite victims have learned not to rely on expensive antivenoms that would be effectively administered in hospitals, defaulting instead to ineffective folk remedies. Production of antivenom is expensive, but that's not the only problem. The world's countries have different medical approval processes and agencies, many of which are not reciprocal with other nations. These problems with approval cost countries in delays and money. Therefore, while antivenom could be available, manufacturers often simply give up on them as unprofitable.

Snakebite! is a versatile text offering an informative adventure as either a casual perusal or an in-depth study of a global health crisis. It features stunning photos of diverse reptiles and many side articles about issues that are both closely and loosely related to the antivenom problem. These photos and articles may either be viewed as small packets of information for those who have only a few minutes, or may be incorporated into the broad narrative of the antivenom problem presented from cover to cover. Examples of the book's featured topics are problems in drug production and approval, for-profit medical systems, and the environment. Because of the variety of these contributing factors and the detail he dedicates to them, the author risks being a little unfocused on the main topic. Big-picture readers will enjoy that aspect, while it might annoy those who would like a detailed biological or medical tutorial on the antivenom issue. So put on your extra thick socks and peek under your sofa as you pick up Snakebite!, because a forest cobra may be lurking somewhere in your living room.