

# Art in Science: Selections from Emerging Infectious Diseases

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Sarah Gregory] Polyxeni Potter is the founding managing editor of the *Emerging Infectious Diseases* journal. Joe McDade was the founding editor and Peter Drotman is the current editor-in-chief. They charted the *science* course of the publication. Potter charted the *publishing* course, from establishment of the journal in 1995 as a quarterly newcomer in its class, to the present monthly publication, which makes a substantial contribution to the biomedical literature.

Despite her work as managing editor, which involved setting up and running day-to-day operations, Potter is now better known for her efforts to align the journal's technical science content with the public health mission of communicating the threat of infectious disease emergence around the globe. These efforts involved an interdisciplinary approach to science publishing, with greater accessibility to a Web audience and attention to the human side of disease emergence.

Using art on the covers of *Emerging Infectious Diseases* was part of this approach. Art covers began in 1997 and have become part of the journal's brand and profile. A commentary discussing the art and how it relates to the public health content has been a regular feature since 2002. Part of this body of work has been collected in a book just published by Oxford University Press. The title of the book is *Art in Science: Selections from Emerging Infectious Diseases*. I'm Sarah Gregory, Communication Lead for the EID journal.

[Reginald Tucker] And I'm Reginald Tucker, Production Manager for the journal. Today we're talking with Poly Potter.

Poly, tell us about the inception of the journal. In 1995, when *Emerging Infectious Diseases* was launched, the scientific journal market was replete with well-established publications dealing exclusively with infectious diseases. Why a new journal?

[Poly Potter] The global threat of emerging infections, which was highlighted by a series of reports by the Institute of Medicine in the 1980s and 90s, prompted CDC to create a strategic plan against these infections. The *EID* journal was part of this plan. The mission of the journal was to communicate the threat globally.

[Reginald Tucker] What about the journal's path as an electronic journal?

[Poly Potter] The threat of emerging infections coincided in the early 1990s with the entrance onto the publishing scene of electronic communication. New thinking about infectious diseases and new communication techniques converged. This is why this journal has always been primarily an online journal.

[Reginald Tucker] Why did you decide to use art on the covers in the first place? What was your vision?

[Poly Potter] At first, the idea was to attract the reader's attention. On a table with many offerings, the one that has a color image on it gets picked up. But of course art does much more than attract attention. It intrigues and stimulates. It's an opportunity to discuss, explain, and make connections.

[Reginald Tucker] Writing about the intersection of art and science month after month can't be easy. What are your criteria for choosing the art and how difficult is it to tie that to the theme of the month?

[Poly Potter] Selecting art is a journey of discovery, which begins from memory but also in museums and books. Connecting art with the human aspects of public health is not difficult because art is not separate from the human aspects of anything. Art lends itself to contemplation and connection. Once the connection is made in the eyes and in the mind, it can be communicated. It's a very gratifying experience.

[Reginald Tucker] Poly, you are retiring at the end of the month. You must have had hopes and aspirations for the journal. Do you feel its success has met your expectations?

[Poly Potter] *Emerging Infectious Diseases* is now on a very solid ground. I am proud to have been part of its history.

[Sarah Gregory] Poly, would you like to talk a bit about putting together the book just published by Oxford Press?

[Poly Potter] The new book, *Art in Science*, has been long in the making. The challenge was not only to make a collection but also to add value to the covers and essays that appear in *Emerging Infectious Diseases* over the years. As it stands now, the book is a visual but, I hope, also a highly readable tour of the factors involved in disease emergence. This book is also tangible proof of the natural connection between the arts and science.

[Sarah Gregory] So how can people obtain a copy of this book?

[Poly Potter] The book is available from Oxford University Press and on Amazon.com.

[Sarah Gregory] Polyxeni Potter retires from CDC on December 31, 2013. This is Sarah Gregory, with Reginald Tucker, for *Emerging Infectious Diseases*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.