Was ‘Plague of Athens’ 2,400 years ago actually an Ebola epidemic?

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

In the summer of 430 B.C., a mass outbreak of disease hit the city of Athens, ravaging the city’s population over the next five years. In his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, the historian Thucydides, who witnessed the epidemic, described victims’ “violent heats in the head,” “redness and inflammation in the eyes,” and tongues and throats “becoming bloody and emitting an unnatural and fetid breath.”

More than 2,000 years later, the Plague of Athens remains a scientific mystery. Thucydides’ account—the only surviving description of the epidemic—has been the basis for dozens of modern-day theories about its cause, including bubonic plague, cholera, typhoid fever, influenza, and measles. And in June, an article in the journal *Clinical Infectious Disease* suggested another answer: Ebola.
The article, written by the infectious-disease specialist Powel Kazanjian, is the latest in a string of papers arguing that Athens was once the site of an Ebola outbreak. The surgeon Gayle Scarrow first raised the suggestion in *The Ancient History Bulletin* in 1988. Eight years later, the epidemiologist Patrick Olson published a letter in *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, a journal of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, comparing the symptoms of the Athens plague to those of Ebola, which had broken out in the Democratic Republic of Congo (then Zaire) and Sudan in 1976. “The profile of the ancient disease,” he concluded, “is remarkably similar.”

Read full, original post: Solving the Mystery of an Ancient Epidemic