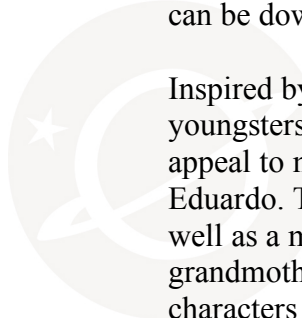




## Teaching Science With a Comic Book

*New York Hall of Science Publishes Digital Interactive Comic Book  
About Human-Animal Diseases*

Queens, NY – The [New York Hall of Science](http://www.nysci.org) (NYSCI) has created an interactive, web-based comic book that explores diseases that can be spread from humans to other animals. *Transmissions: Gone Viral* can be downloaded online for free at [nysci.org/transmissions](http://nysci.org/transmissions).

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page, featuring a white crescent moon and a five-pointed star on a light grey circular background.

Inspired by the 1999 West Nile Virus epidemic, *Transmissions: Gone Viral* follows a group of youngsters who investigate a virus plaguing animals and humans in their neighborhood. Designed to appeal to middle school students, the three main characters are neighborhood children – Maria, Rani and Eduardo. The youngsters first come across a dead crow and soon learn reports of more dead birds, as well as a mysterious illness that is affecting some elderly neighbors, including Eduardo and Maria’s grandmother. Fearful for its citizens’ wellbeing, the town plans to cancel its big parade that the characters have been planning to participate in for weeks.

Readers follow along as the characters work with a veterinary pathologist and an entomologist to investigate the mystery of the dead crows. Interactive challenges embedded in the narrative engage readers in sorting evidence and finding patterns that may help solve the mystery. Interactives include “Build a Body,” where readers learn about homologous bones from different animals and match limbs to incomplete skeletons; “Map App,” to explore the location of various types of evidence including dead birds, rat poison, garbage and standing water; and “Virus Game,” where the reader becomes a virus with a goal of spreading infection by the most efficient means possible.

By the end of the story, readers will understand evolutionary principles of biology and homology (similar biological structures between different organisms), and that all animals, including humans, are related and can share diseases. They will also understand the scientific process of sorting evidence, finding patterns, forming hypotheses, and using scientific tests to confirm their theories.

“By focusing on a mystery that kids will want to solve, *Transmissions* takes the science inquiry process out of the textbook and makes it concrete,” says Martin Weiss, senior scientist for NYSCI. “In the process, kids will not only learn about evolution and zoonotic diseases, but they will also learn what it takes to be a scientist: curiosity, persistence and an open mind.”

The digital comic book can be used by individuals or by students in a classroom setting. For school and after-school settings, NYSCI created companion teacher guides that can be used to explore a variety of subjects, including biology, health, social science and English language arts. The teacher guides can be downloaded at no cost from [nysci.org/transmissions](http://nysci.org/transmissions).

*Transmissions: Gone Viral* was the result of years of research and work by a number of NYSCI staff members, including Senior Scientist Martin Weiss and Creative Producer GERALYN Abinader. NYSCI



New York Hall of Science



created the digital comic book with the help of the expertise of writer, Karen de Seve of Creative Content Studio, and comic artist, Charlie LaGreca. *Transmissions* was developed by Blue Telescope.

NYSCI staff worked with a team of advisors that included Tracey McNamara, currently of Western University of Health Sciences. The zoo scientist in *Transmissions: Gone Viral* was based on Dr. McNamara's experience as a veterinary pathologist at the Wildlife Conservation Society and her instrumental role in helping to identify West Nile Virus. Other advisors included Paul Calle of the Wildlife Conservation Society, Elizabeth Uhl of the University of Georgia Veterinary School, Steven Stearns of Yale University, Laurie Fink of Minnesota Science Museum, and Katura Reynolds of the Woodland Park Zoo.

The web-based comic book can be downloaded at [nysci.org/transmissions](https://nysci.org/transmissions).

Images for Media Use can be downloaded from the New York Hall of Science Flickr site at <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmB9Gmd2>

*Transmissions: Gone Viral* is funded by a grant from the National Institutes of Health SEPA program.

*This project was supported by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, the National Institutes of Health under Award Number R25GM129168. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.*

**The New York Hall of Science** – The mission of the New York Hall of Science (NYSCI) is to nurture generations of passionate learners, critical thinkers and active citizens through an approach called Design, Make, Play. Design, Make, Play emphasizes open-ended exploration, imaginative learning and personal relevance, resulting in deep engagement and delight in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. NYSCI was founded at the 1964-65 World's Fair and has evolved into New York's center for interactive science serving a half million students, teachers and families each year. NYSCI is open Monday – Friday, 9:30 am – 5 pm and weekends, 10 am – 6 pm. General admission is \$16 for adults and \$13 for children (ages 2-17), college students with valid ID, and seniors (62+). For more information, visit [nysci.org](https://nysci.org) or call 718-699-0005. Follow NYSCI on Twitter and Instagram: @nysci, and on Facebook at: [facebook.com/nysci](https://facebook.com/nysci).

**Media Contacts:**

Mary Record  
[mrecord@nysci.org](mailto:mrecord@nysci.org)  
718-595-9123

Lauren Parikhhal  
[lparikhhal@nysci.org](mailto:lparikhhal@nysci.org)  
718-683-9396

###

