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Título: Viruses Vs. Superbugs. A Solution To The Antibiotics Crisis?

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Starred Review* Once upon a time, before penicillin, medicine's perpetual battle with bacterial infection was waged with biological weapons. Phages--viruses that kill bacteria but are harmless to humans--were used to perform duties for which they seemed uniquely destined. The story of bacteriophage therapy, which began in the early twentieth century, is dramatic and frustrating. The drama lies in Swedish science editor Hausler's account of how the ideas of an arrogant rogue scientist, Felix d'Herelle, flew in the faces of his contemporaries and how he persevered to prove his hypotheses, only to see his discovery put on a back burner, at least in the West, when modern antibiotics burst upon the scene. That development would have been fine if it had meant a conclusion to struggle against the likes of strep and staph infections. The problem is, however, that greater and greater numbers of serious bacteria are becoming antibiotic resistant. With nearly 90,000 Americans dying each year because antibiotic treatments are no longer effective, something must be done. Hausler proposes renewed investigation into bacteriophage therapy but paints a dismal picture of its likelihood. It is, he says, effective and organic but unlikely to become a cash cow for pharmaceutical companies. Donna Chavez