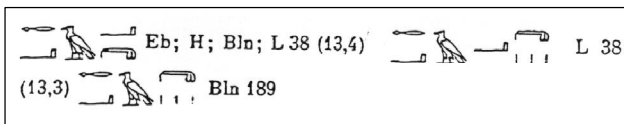


### AIDS: Déjà Vu in Ancient Egypt?

**To the Editor:** The recent letter by Olson et al. (1) on the plague of Athens and the “re-emergence (?)” of Ebola virus prompts brief reiteration of an earlier communication (2) placing human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) back in history, possibly in the time of the pharaohs.

Translations of the Papyrus Ebers from ancient Egyptian literature repeatedly make reference to difficulties in the diagnosis of conditions under the names *ĀĀĀ disease*, *uxedu-disease*, and *uha-disease* (3). The interpretation of these diseases has been inconclusive among Egyptologists. However, the many remedies proposed for the ravages of *ĀĀĀ*, whether by itself or complicated by *uxedu-* or *uha-disease*, brand it as a scourge of first magnitude. *ĀĀĀ* is mentioned 50 times in four papyri (28 times in Papyrus Ebers, 12 times in Papyrus Berlin, 9 times in Papyrus Hearst, and once in the London Papyrus [4]). The hieroglyphic symbol for *ĀĀĀ* (5) is shown below.



The hieroglyphic symbol for *ĀĀĀ disease*, translated as “semen” or “poison” (From: Von Deines and Westeneorf [5])

Could this be documentation of HIV, or more accurately its prototype, occurring in Egypt during the time of the pharaohs?

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