

1. "Survival of the Sickest" by Sharon Moalem is about disease and medicine and somewhat strangely reminded me of "Freakonomics." Just as "Freakonomics" is an unorthodox take on economics, "Survival of the Sickest" is an unorthodox take on disease and medicine. Instead of fighting disease by trying to kill it, this book advocates and cites supporting research that learning to co-evolve with sickness is a better strategy.
 - a. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Survival_of_the_Sickest_\(book\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Survival_of_the_Sickest_(book))
2. The toxoplasma gondii parasite modifies mice to not be scared of cats.
 - a. <http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn22599-parasite-makes-mice-fearless-by-hijacking-immune-cells.html>
 - b. <http://www.britannica.com/blogs/2013/09/cat-parasite-makes-mice-fearless-forever/>
 - i. "In order for its life cycle to be perpetuated, T. gondii that is shed in cat feces must be picked up by a secondary host, which may be a rodent or a human. Rodents are the better secondary host, since they can be eaten by cats, enabling T. gondii to continue its life cycle. So, by removing rodents' innate aversion to the smell of cat urine, T. gondii may be increasing the likelihood that they'll be pounced on and eaten by cats, in turn increasing its chances of transmission."
3. This same toxoplasma gondii appears to make human women more promiscuous and human men dumber.
 - a. <http://www.viewzone.com/toxo.html>
4. Lancet flukes are a parasite that go from cows to snails to ants back to cows again. The cow->snail transmission is straightforward: cow poop gets eaten. The snail->ant transmission is similar: snail slime is eaten by the ants. But ant->cow is fascinating. In the ants, the flukes infect the nervous system where they make the ants inexplicitly climb stalks of grass making them more easily consumed by the cows.
 - a. <http://www.damninteresting.com/a-fluke-of-nature/>
5. There is some powerful evidence that too much hygiene is responsible for allergies. The idea is that our bodies evolved to fight parasites and in the absence of those parasites, those parasite-fighting organisms in our body get confused and attack pollen and other stuff that they shouldn't. There are a few companies selling worms so people can infect themselves as a treatment but it's not available in the US because it's not FDA approved.
 - a. <http://commonhealth.wbur.org/2012/09/worms-germs-asthma-autism>
 - b. <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/AllergiesNews/story?id=8114307>
6. "Peeps" by Scott Westerfeld is a young adult novel about a fictional parasite that basically turns people into vampires but they aren't your typical Dracula vampires at all. It intersperse chapters advancing the story with short chapters with fascinating little blurbs about real life non-fictional parasites.
 - a. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peeps_\(novel\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peeps_(novel))
7. Perhaps unrelatedly but I'm reminded of it by the FDA not approving worm therapy is that I think the war on drugs has screwed up medicine pretty badly. They put acetaminophen into Percocet to prevent oxycodone abuse since too much oxycodone might cause addiction problems. But too much acetaminophen is much worse since it can kill you. Similarly, Marinol is legal synthesized THC, one of the psychoactive ingredients in marijuana which by itself can be dysphoric. Natural marijuana is more likely to be euphoric because cannabinoids balance the THC. But the FDA actually *likes* the dyphoric properties of Marinol since it makes it less likely to be addictive: "Hey kid, sorry you need chemotherapy and it makes you nauseous. This marinol might help your stomach feel better but it might also make you really scarily paranoid."