

1. Most victims of Kuru were women and children. Explain why few men succumbed to the disease.

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2. What evidence led scientists to believe that kuru is a prion disease?

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3. Identify and explain factors that might have prevented scientists from identifying the cause of kuru for many years.

4. Nobel prizes were awarded to the scientists mentioned in the kuru story. Construct a time line to identify the steps that contributed to their awards.

5. Protein structure relates directly to its function.

a. At which part of protein production does an error occur that results in a prion disease?

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b. Outline when, during the production process, other types of errors can occur.

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6. Blood donation is encouraged in Australia, but why can't people who lived in England in the 1980s and 90s donate blood?

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7. Explain why blood cannot be 'treated' in order to make it safe.

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8. Is it possible that an outbreak of kuru could happen again? Explain your answer.

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9. The human body can usually cope with, or destroy, pathogens such as bacteria, viruses and fungi through mechanisms of the immune system. Venom from snakes, spiders and some fish can also often be dealt with in this way. However, evidence suggests that prions cannot be controlled by the immune system. Why?

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