

Lyme is Not Rare in Canada

Most people know very little about Lyme disease or how serious, chronic, debilitating and fatal it can be. Lyme sufferers are an isolated community. We've had to stick together because of the lack of understanding, testing and support for this disease in Canada. Sadly, over the past few years, I have been inundated with calls from people who are frightened and just beginning their frustrating struggle to find answers and proper treatment for their loved ones. To say that I have been touched by their stories and personal tragedies is an understatement.



Lyme disease affects millions of people worldwide—Canada is no exception. But unlike West Nile or Bird Flu, Lyme disease has received little attention by our government and medical establishment. This is perplexing, particularly when you consider that more people in North America contract Lyme than they do AIDS, West Nile and Avian Flu combined.

In Canada, the lack of awareness, medical expertise and political will is appalling. The Center for Disease Control in the U.S. estimates that in 2007 more than 200,000 Americans contracted Lyme. Health Canada's statistics, however, are quite different—only 50 cases yearly, they claim, in Canada—a farce of a number that reflects the poor understanding, inaccurate testing and misdiagnosis that goes on here.

It's time to spread the real word.

Lyme is a bacterial infection contracted through the bite of certain ticks. It's been found in all provinces in Canada and, with global warming, will only continue to spread. It is absolutely ludicrous to think that Canada is immune to this rising epidemic given we are a country of grass, trees and many provincial parks. Lyme is in our backyard and everyone is vulnerable, from the gardener, the dog walker, the hunter, the camper and even the child in the playground. Your domestic pet could even bring ticks into your home. My message is not to scare but to inform and protect: Be smart about your health, know the facts about Lyme and protect yourself against all ticks.

Here's the good news. Unlike Cancer, we're not struggling to find a cure for Lyme disease. We already know how to treat it. Lyme is 100% curable if detected early. All you need is an inexpensive, regimen of antibiotics.

But here's the bad news. Our screening test in Canada for identifying Lyme disease has been so unreliable and riddled with false negatives, chances are you will be misdiagnosed for months and bounced from specialist to specialist. By then, it could be too late to stop the devastating effects of the disease.

How you can help. My dream has been to build Canada's first research and testing facility devoted to Lyme disease but it can't be a dream anymore. It has to happen right now. There has been far too much suffering for far too long. The Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation (CanLyme) and Magnotta are determined to establish this critical facility but we can't do it alone. Help us spread the word about Lyme, ask a lot of questions, especially from your doctors, and support CanLyme fund raising activities to build our facility so that Canadians inflicted with Lyme can finally receive the support and care they are entitled to.

To arrange an interview with Rossana Magnotta, contact: Marisa Mainella, 905-738-9463, marisa.mainella@magnotta.com

Know the Facts

200+

Number of illnesses where Lyme bacteria have been found.

200,000

Due to under-reporting, actual number of Americans estimated to have contracted Lyme in 2007.

50

Inaccurate number of Lyme cases reported yearly by the Canadian government due to lack of understanding, poor testing methods and misdiagnoses.

1.5 million

Number of Canadians suffering from diseases of unknown origin many of which just happen to mirror the symptoms of Lyme.

Source: Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation