

May 1, 2017

Dear Member of the One Hundred and Fifteenth Congress:

Lyme Disease is the fastest growing vector-borne infectious disease in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Although sometimes thought of as just an “East Coast problem”, Lyme disease and associated co-infections are now found in all 50 states and world-wide. Early detection and treatment are essential to prevent the long-term, disabling symptoms associated with chronic Lyme disease.

Chronic tick-borne diseases can be both emotionally and financially devastating to individuals and families and to the productivity of our country. In 2012, approximately half of all adults (49.8%, 117 million) had at least 1 of 10 selected chronic conditions, 24.3% had 1 chronic condition, 13.8% had 2 conditions, and 11.7% had 3 or more conditions.

By one estimate, chronic diseases cost more than \$2.5 trillion each year, and according to the WHO, we spend more on health care expenditures than almost any other country, yet we rank 37th in overall health among 193 countries surveyed. Our total expenditures on health as a percentage of GDP has risen from 9.0% in 1980, to 17.9% in 2010, and that trend is predicted to continue to rise into the next decade. Where do these costs come from?

Treating people with chronic diseases accounts for 86% of our nation’s health care costs, and despite these staggering figures, chronic diseases are on the rise. The prevalence of autism in the US has risen from 1/150 cases in 2000 to 1 in 68 in 2012. Every 67 seconds someone in the US is diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. Autoimmune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis (MS) affect over 50 million Americans. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/Myalgic Encephalomyelitis and Fibromyalgia together affect 5% of the US population. Per the CDC, infectious diseases like Lyme disease have increased 10-fold since 2013, with close to 400,000 individuals affected every year, and the number of high-risk counties has increased by 320% over the past two decades. These figures do not account for increased numbers of associated tick-borne infections. Apart from causing increased morbidity and mortality, what do these diseases have in common? Our medical system claims it has no answers. It often treats end stage manifestations of these illnesses with drugs, which can be expensive and ineffective, without identifying preventable and treatable causes. This aspect of the health care system is broken. Is there a solution?

I have been a physician for more than three decades, and treated over 12,000 Lyme patients who have failed the traditional health care model. Many of these individuals go to 10-20 physicians before getting a proper diagnosis, and oftentimes are diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/Myalgic Encephalomyelitis, Fibromyalgia, an autoimmune illness like rheumatoid arthritis or MS, or early dementia. Lyme is known as the great imitator, mimicking these different illnesses. In searching for answers for these patients, I have identified up to 16 reasons why they remain chronically ill. I call this syndrome “Multiple Systemic Infectious Disease Syndrome” (MSIDS). The first point on the MSIDS map is infections. Ticks now contain

multiple infections which can be transmitted simultaneously with *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the agent of Lyme disease, and patients with Lyme-MSIDS also have evidence of environmental toxins, inflammation and detoxification problems. Why do we need to address chronic infections, environmental toxins and inflammation in our health care model?

The CDC has identified cancer, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases as some of the top leading causes of death and disability in the US. These diseases as well as many others, have now been shown to have a direct link to environmental pollutants. We are constantly exposed to hundreds of environmental toxins every day, and scientific studies have shown that these toxins have been associated with cardiovascular disease, cancer, autoimmune disease, as well as neurodegenerative diseases like ALS, autism and Alzheimer's disease. Lyme disease spirochetes have also now been found in the brains of Alzheimer's patients and have been linked with autoimmune manifestations. Infections and toxins increase inflammation, and inflammation is a common denominator underlying chronic diseases, costing taxpayers billions of dollars every year. I would ask every member of Congress to please ensure that their funding and priorities in health care are commensurate with the severity and extent of the chronic epidemics we face, and ensure that federal agencies are held accountable for fulfilling their mandate to prevent and control diseases.

There is a commonly held belief in medicine, called Pasteur's postulate that there is "one cause for one disease", yet scientific advances have disproven this theory. According to the National Census Bureau, 19% of Americans are disabled, so improved prevention, diagnosis and treatment of chronic illnesses like Lyme disease is essential. I assisted with drafting **H.R. 4701, the Tick-borne Disease Research Accountability and Transparency Act**, which became part of the 21st Century Cures Act, H.R. 6, and was signed into law in December 2016 by President Obama. The Act will give patients, advocates and their treating physicians a seat at the table, will increase oversight and accountability over tick-borne research, and requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services, informed by the working group report, to submit a strategic plan to Congress on a regular basis. This plan will include benchmarks to measure progress.

May is Lyme Awareness month. Let's not forget the role of Lyme disease, chronic infections and toxins increasing costs of chronic illness. If we change the paradigm of American health care, emphasizing a more personalized, precision medical approach as modeled by the MSIDS model, perhaps we can together solve the health care challenges facing us in the 21st century. I have enclosed a copy of my new bestselling book: "How Can I Get Better? An Action Plan for treating Resistant Lyme & Chronic Disease" that describes the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of chronic illnesses. Let's make American healthy again. I look forward to working with you in the future.

Very truly yours,

Richard Horowitz, M.D.

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