

LymeMD News

LYME DISEASE RESEARCH

FOUNDATION



Lyme Disease, alive and ticking . . .

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LymeMD's "What I Did on My Summer Vacation"

The small island of Nantucket, Massachusetts is a 'hot bed' of Lyme disease where 60% of households have been affected by tick-borne disease. Thus, Nantucket was a perfect setting for Dr. Aucott and a team from LymeMD to initiate a major educational effort. He invited several of the nation's top Lyme disease and tick-borne disease experts to join him on Nantucket for a full day of information sharing with the public and the island hospital's professional staff.

More than 300 people attended one of the day's several events designed to educate and raise awareness about Lyme disease and an emerging tick-borne infection called babesiosis. Lyme disease cases are increasing all across the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states. Many people who took part in the sessions were surprised to find out how unsuccessful Nantucket's deer-population control efforts have been to date.

Despite the residents' best efforts, the steadily growing deer population has contributed to an alarming increase in the number of cases of Lyme disease on Nantucket. Because of the

many seemingly insurmountable obstacles to eradication of the animal and ticks responsible for the spread of Lyme disease, it seems certain that tick-borne diseases will remain a growing challenge for us all.

Dr. Aucott shared the work of LymeMD and its research to discover new blood tests that will improve both the diagnosis and treatment of Lyme disease. He highlighted the work being done in collaboration with basic researchers at Johns Hopkins Medical School to gain a better understanding of the role of the immune system in patients who do not recover their good health after being diagnosed with Lyme disease, despite treatment with standard antibiotic regimens.

The hundreds of people who attended, many of whom who have suffered from a tick-borne disease themselves or know someone else who has, took great comfort that these leading medical experts are determined to work together and find answers about the many unknowns of these debilitating diseases.



Is There a Lyme Disease Gender Gap?

Blood tests to diagnose Lyme disease may be less accurate in women than in men. Such is the finding just published by LymeMD's very own Alison Schwarzwald MPH.

Alison, our Coordinator for the SLICE Study, has published her results in the national journal Gender Medicine. The implications that women may respond with lower values on the Lyme disease IgG Western blot test may have major implications.

This antibody test holds the **key** to the diagnosis of later manifestations of Lyme disease such as arthritis and neuropathy. If women are in fact less likely to produce diagnostic levels of the antibodies, they might be at even higher risk of misdiagnosis than men.

It is known that the Lyme antibody test is not reliable in detecting Lyme disease in the first several week of infection. In fact, there can be up to 40-60% false negatives when the test is used in the first weeks of infection. The major role of the test has been to confirm the diagnosis in patients who remain ill for more than several weeks.

Lyme testing can be tricky. The ability of the test to show a true positive is diminished when patients receive early antibiotic therapy. Because of this, false negative tests also can occur in patients who have received antibiotics during the first few weeks of infection.

Lyme tests do not function as a "test of cure." Repeating a test after treatment of Lyme disease is not helpful since the antibodies remain in a patient's system for months to years even after adequate antibiotic treatment.

Given all the limitations of the antibody blood test for Lyme, it is hardly a wonder doctors and patients are confused about how to diagnose the disease accurately and in a timely manner. The focus of LymeMD's research is on finding better tests to diagnose and measure the response to therapy in Lyme disease.

Congratulations, Alison, for your original and insightful work that is helping to advance our understanding and approaches to diagnosing and treating Lyme disease.



"Spring for Lyme," Maryland's first Lyme disease education and fundraising event was held this spring at the Baltimore Museum of Industry.

Graciously sponsored by Phil, Nora, and Drew Kenney and the Kenney Family Foundation, Spring for Lyme, raised awareness about the growing impact of Lyme disease and the urgent need for Lyme disease research. Donna Hamilton, news anchor from WBAL TV news was the Honorary Guest for the evening's event. Donna has first-hand experience with Lyme disease and recently shared her story with the WBAL audience (<http://www.wbal.com/health/22744251/detail.html>).

The event was a tremendous success with more than 300 people in attendance. Educational resources and information on how to reduce the risk of Lyme disease was shared.

A substantial gift from the evening's proceeds was donated to fund research at the Lyme Disease Research Foundation of Maryland. Visit Spring for Lyme, (<http://www.springforlyme.org/index.html>) for photos and more information.



A WELL-DESERVED HONOR!

The Founder and inspiration behind LymeMD, Dr. John Aucott, was selected by the prestigious Institute of Medicine of the National Academies to serve on a panel to discuss the "State of Science, General Research Gaps and Opportunities in Tick-Borne Diseases."

On October 11-12, a pre-eminent group of national experts met to discuss the critical needs and missing pieces in the understanding of Lyme disease and other tick-borne infections. This gathering represents a unique opportunity for Dr. Aucott to bring his experience and firsthand knowledge of caring for patients with Lyme disease to this group of leaders in the field.

Go to <http://www.iom.edu/~media/Files/Activity%20Files/Disease/TickBorne/AGENDA-09022010.pdf> to see an article about the event!

Note to the Friends of LymeMD: We try very hard to ensure that our records reflect the correct spelling and proper title of each of our supporters. In the event that we have made an error, PLEASE let us know. An email that you send to us at: info@lymemd.org with your corrected contact information will go into our records as soon as we hear from you.

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Contributions are welcome and can be made directly on the website



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