

Written Testimony: Proposed Bill No 6200  
CT Legislative Hearing, February 6, 2009

2/4/09

My name is Dr Richard Horowitz. I am a board certified internist and President of the International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society Educational Foundation, and I have been actively treating Chronic Lyme Disease for the past 20 years. When I moved to the Upstate N.Y. area from Queens, I established a medical practice in the Hudson Valley, which is one of the most heavily Lyme endemic areas in NY State. Although I was accepting general internal medicine patients into my practice for the first several years, I ended up devoting the focus of my practice to Chronic Lyme Disease, since so many of these patients continued to remain ill after standard, short term therapy. I wished to find answers for these chronically ill patients, and started attending Lyme conferences and doing research in my medical practice. I have published approximately 20 articles and abstracts over the years on Chronic Lyme Disease and the role of associated co-infections, and have now treated over 11,000 Chronic Lyme Disease patients. I would therefore like to share some of my essential insights into this disease, which I hope you will find useful for your constituents in Connecticut.

As you may be aware, there is tremendous controversy in the medical community regarding the proper diagnosis and treatment of patients with Chronic Lyme Disease. The infectious disease community (IDSA) believes that this is a disease which is both easy to diagnose and treat, and that 30 days of antibiotics is sufficient for the vast majority of patients. This is a gross misrepresentation of the facts, and is only true for patients with early stage Lyme disease, which can be cured with short courses of antibiotics in 80-90% of the cases. The majority of cases that I see have been to 10-20 physicians before coming to my office, having spent tens of thousands of dollars for medical workups, and suffered for many years without finding answers. They are told that they have chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, some form of non-specific auto-immune disease, or that they are simply depressed and anxious and need to seek out the care of a psychiatrist. These patients suffer for many years with chronic fatigue, muscle and joint pains, debilitating headaches, and severe memory and concentration problems to name just a few of the most prominent symptoms. They are disabled and suffer for a long time because no doctor has been able to correctly diagnose and treat them for their Chronic Lyme Disease. This is primarily because most doctors follow the infectious disease guidelines from the IDSA, which ultimately prevents them from obtaining proper treatment. ILADS (The International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society) also has guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of Chronic Lyme Disease, which is published on the government's website (National Guidelines Clearinghouse), and I am a co-author of those guidelines. I have found that following the ILADS guidelines clinically helps patients to get better, and that following the IDSA guidelines does not. Physicians must therefore be able to have the right to choose which set of guidelines they wish to follow, based on their best medical judgment and clinical experience.

Many physicians are afraid to treat patients for Chronic Lyme Disease because of potential reprimands from medical boards and insurance companies, where physicians have lost their licenses or been removed from insurance panels simply because they followed the Hippocratic Oath of putting the patient first. I have hundreds of patients who regularly come from Connecticut because their doctors are unwilling to diagnose or treat them for this disease. The present political climate does not allow physicians the freedom to properly care for their patients. Bill #6200 will remedy this situation. I therefore respectfully request that you support this bills passage as it has tremendous implications for the future health care in your state.

Thank you for your time and attention,

Dr Richard Horowitz  
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