

Dear Woman's Hour

In the last eighteen months, here in Germany I have witnessed keenly and at first hand as a friend of an English Lyme Borreliosis sufferer, Kathryn, resident here, the level to which this illness remains unaccepted in the medical world. Highly educated doctors - for whom it would be a singular opportunity to get to the bottom of a disease unique in its diversity of symptoms but with hitherto far too little research devoted to it - seem tragically to persist in clinging to conventional academic medicine and to trivialise the all too dramatic consequences for the patient.

Even if many symptoms of late-stage Lyme Disease resemble or are even the same as symptoms of other established illnesses, a 'one-size-fits-all' line of therapy is simply not viable. The complex of symptoms must and should instead be studied and effectively treated, specifically tailored to Lyme Disease. It is also unacceptable that when considering whether to approve treatment, health insurance companies still rely on outdated lists of authorised services that no longer correspond to the science of today. This means that Lyme Disease patients are forced to pay vast sums out of their own pocket for vital therapies, which in the main they have even had to search out for themselves.

Moreover, doctors versed in Lyme Disease with the necessary specialist knowledge - which is an absolute must for therapy to be effective - do not exist in all countries to the same degree so that patients, yet again through their own research, have to travel, for instance, from the UK to Germany to visit a doctor with the relevant competence in the hope, often after years of suffering, of finally receiving targeted therapy. Naturally, this too is at the private expense of the patient. In the same way as cancer, plague, cholera or AIDS are, it should be the aim of medicine to recognise Lyme Disease worldwide as a separate illness and to treat it comprehensively and effectively. Also the disabled status of patients with late-stage Lyme Disease should also be recognised as a matter of course.

Understanding and acceptance of this disease must be raised and made manifest throughout the general population.

Your sincerely,

Axel Brackmann

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