

Dear Woman's Hour,

I'm pleased that you covered Lyme disease this morning, and hope that your audience today will be alerted to the dangers. I also hope that the BBC will do more in-depth programmes as soon as possible, so that the true problems and the real controversies of the topic are revealed to the public. It's unfortunate that, until someone explains the full extent of medical and scientific debate that's happening with issues pertaining to this infection, it could be many years before the matter is taken seriously by the general public.

BBC researchers, and health and science correspondents, must surely be aware of the massive spread of Lyme borreliosis and associated diseases across Europe, and I can only speculate that something is hindering you from broadcasting the facts about the true extent of the epidemic - perhaps you are worried that you might stand accused of causing panic if those facts were aired?

When looking at the facts, controlled panic might be deemed the proper response to such a danger to public health! However, the general public remain unaware and at risk of becoming infected, and also they need to be warned of the difficulties that lie in wait for them when seeking appropriate medical treatment.

Some of the facts that the BBC are not warning the public about are as follows:

Fact 1: Lyme borreliosis infection may be as devastating as Syphilis and TB, and can require treatment with multiple antimicrobials over extended periods of time. Yet that treatment is not available in our National Health System, because we follow rigid guidelines as advised by Public Health England and the European Centres for Disease Control.

Fact 2: The incidence rate in some areas of Europe is at epidemic levels, and it is believed (and statistically highly likely) that there are many tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of UK citizens who remain undiagnosed and suffering with the infection.

Fact 3: The diagnostic tests are documented as being not fit for purpose: the sensitivity can be as low as 50%, with the result that no doctor can honestly say that they are certain that a patient does or does not have Lyme disease, or a similar borreliosis infection. This is untenable in terms of protecting the nation's health.

Tests which were able to detect the *Borrelia* organism itself, rather than rely on a patient's antibodies, were developed many years ago, but they are not used, and rather frowned upon, and

one wonders why. One criticism over 10 years ago, was that this type of test found "too many positive cases". This suggests something is going on which borders on collusion by public health advisers to downplay what is now the fastest growing cause of debilitating illness in the northern hemisphere (outstripping HIV and breast cancer combined).

Fact 4: There is a danger to the foetus during pregnancy if the mother is infected. Instead of researching the pathology of this occurrence, which has been documented in the medical literature since 1989, the problem is being ignored completely by the Department of Health.

Fact 5: There is a lack of funding and of serious concern from UK government bodies, during present and previous administrations. They have ignored warnings from UK scientists (as long ago as 1993), that Lyme borreliosis is a danger to the public across the British Isles.

Fact 6: Doctors have not been advised strongly enough that borreliosis infections may be the cause of sudden stroke, meningitis, multiple neurological deficits, dementias, Parkinsonian symptoms, behavioural and psychological disorders, Multiple Sclerosis and other demyelinating disorders, Lupus, eye disease, bladder, kidney and liver disorders, cardiac weakness, heart block and arrhythmias, collagen and tendon diseases, etc.

Even when they are up-to-date with the multiple effects of Lyme disease on the human body, doctors have been persuaded over many years into believing that Lyme disease is rare in the UK - which means they are less likely to consider Lyme as a potential diagnosis. If they do order a diagnostic Lyme test for their patients, they have not been warned that the tests are not reliable enough to rule out Lyme borreliosis, and cannot detect other strains of the disease which are present in this country.

Fact 7: Blood and tissue banks are at risk of being infected after donations from asymptomatic patients.

I am sure that after today's programme, many patients will write to you describing their personal experiences with lack of diagnosis and lack of treatment; many of them will also be able to tell you in detail of how badly the science and best medical practice are being ignored.

But I wonder how many harrowing personal tales it will take, and how many science-based affirmations will be needed, before someone realises that we have a dangerous problem which must be given priority by the media.

I could point you to several academic sources for further information but I'm sure that your

researchers are able to investigate for themselves most of the issues. At least 1 BBC journalist was present at the patient-led Parliamentary Lyme symposium on 19th January 2015, chaired by Lady Mar and organised by the then Justice Minister Simon Hughes MP. The meeting was attended by senior staff from Public Health England. Details of the medical and scientific presentations at that meeting are available here:

<http://www.counsellingme.com/Par.../MeetingIntroduction.html>

My own presentation is on that page:

<http://www.counsellingme.com/Parliam.../DenPresentation.html>

The facts are all there, the controversies abound - but nothing of their nature has been aired by the BBC. Although it has been very helpful of you to have increased general awareness today, I sincerely hope that Woman's Hour producers and other BBC management will be able to tackle this topic in greater depth in the future, for the good of all our citizens.

Yours faithfully,

Denise Longman MSc

Bitten by 12 ticks in Scotland 1985, became ill one month later.

Lost career, marriage, home and any enjoyment of a normal life, due to multiple symptoms typical of Lyme neuroborreliosis.

Diagnosed nearly 20 years later, and denied appropriate treatment.

To read more letters, click [here](#).