

Multiple Sclerosis and Lyme disease: Are They the Same Disease?

Previously classed a tick-borne illness, it has now been established that ticks are not the only carriers of Lyme disease. Mice, biting flies, spiders and mosquitos are also known transmitters of *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the bacterium responsible for a multi-system infection known as Lyme disease. Floating in a sea of controversy are Lyme's striking resemblances to other diseases that raise questions. With ties connecting to many auto-immune and neurodegenerative disorders; it bears a striking resemblance to multiple sclerosis. Could Lyme and multiple sclerosis (MS) be the same disease?

Lyme disease: The Chronic Problem

Lyme disease, is an elusive bacteria that hides within tissue and can manifest itself in various parts of the body. It is frequently overlooked due to the symptoms it shares with other well known, neurodegenerative illnesses, including many autoimmune diseases. Infamous for its ability to imitate these diseases, Lyme is notoriously misdiagnosed as chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), fibromyalgia, multiple sclerosis (MS), and scleroderma, just to name a few. "The Great Imitator" as it is sometimes called, is said to imitate over 100 different diseases. Coincidentally, none of these diseases have known causes or cures.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and Lyme disease

Multiple sclerosis, a disease affecting the central nervous system, shares remarkable similarities to a well-known neurological manifestation of Lyme, called neuroborreliosis. Symptoms of both are described as, numbness of the body, burning feet, weakness or paralysis of limbs, and encephalopathy or cognitive impairment which occur in flare ups. In both diseases, flare ups occur without any particular recurrence pattern and can be triggered by a traumatic life event or when the immune system has been compromised.

Aside from the matching symptoms, patients diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and patients with neuroborreliosis show similar patterns of white matter visible on brain scans. But, what may perhaps be the strongest link connecting the two diseases, are the geographical patterns of multiple sclerosis. Results of the study revealed a significantly higher frequency in the occurrence of MS in Lyme endemic regions of the United States.

For both diseases, the lack of definitive testing makes accurate diagnosis challenging, requiring a physician to make a clinical diagnosis.¹ Doctors who deny the existence of a chronic Lyme condition will conclude that a patient has MS, without even considering a Lyme infection.

Dr. Franco an NMD at Sunridge Medical, an alternative health and wellness clinic in Scottsdale, AZ said this, "Lyme disease is known for its elusiveness, if you're not looking

¹ A diagnosis made on the basis of medical signs and patient-reported symptoms, rather than diagnostic tests

for it, you're not going to find it. But, when a patient comes in with a chronic illness, it's a good reason to start looking for some type of underlying infection. We see a lot of patients here previously diagnosed with multiple sclerosis that we find have an infection with a particular Lyme expression."

Could Lyme and MS be the Same Disease?

According to recent research, and that which is now widely accepted by scientists and physicians alike; is that chronic infection is lurking behind most or all chronic illness. Could an infection like Lyme disease be the common denominator in all the diseases it is known to imitate?

Considering what we know about the elusive nature of Lyme disease, including the controversy surrounding it – it seems reasonable to accept the possibility that Lyme and MS are the same disease. The continued denial of "chronic" Lyme by the IDSA, despite the undeniable and documented evidence, is thought provoking, if not telling, that Lyme disease could be behind not just one -but many diseases.