



For Lyme Disease Awareness & Action

30 June 2015

MEDIA RELEASE

Lyme-like disease evidence breakthrough

The Lyme Disease Association of Australia congratulates Associate Professor Peter Irwin of Murdoch University and his team of researchers for finding evidence of pathogens that may be making Australian patients with Lyme-like symptoms sick. The Murdoch University research report published on 25 June 2015 in the journal, Parasites & Vectors, found *Borrelia relapsing fever* group, *Bartonella henselae* and a new type of *Neoehrlichia* bacterium, *Anaplasma* and *Rickettsia* in the Australian paralysis tick providing the much awaited scientific evidence that Lyme-like pathogens are present in Australia.

One of the significant findings is that the bacterial pathogens in question are masked or hidden by other organisms which makes them very hard to detect using the current testing processes. This may provide the long awaited explanation for the ineffectiveness of current microbiological testing and sequencing. This breakthrough has the potential to halt the plethora of false negative pathology tests both in Australia and worldwide. False negative tests have resulted in many Lyme-like patients suffering undiagnosed and untreated with this chronic and debilitating disease.

According to Murdoch University the research provides new information about the bacteria associated with the Australian paralysis tick (*Ixodes holocyclus*) and their potential to cause disease in people.

The research results don't come as a surprise to Lyme Disease Association of Australia President, Sharon Whiteman. "We are seeing an increase in people contacting us who are suffering from Lyme-like symptoms. Everything has been pointing to Lyme pathogens being present in Australian ticks given that many of these people haven't travelled overseas," Ms Whiteman said. "We believe that this is sufficient evidence to enable the government to officially recognise that Australian ticks can cause Lyme-like disease and to develop policy that supports the thousands of Lyme patients who are currently receiving little or no treatment through the Australian medical system."

Lyme-like patients in Australia have been waiting over two decades for the evidence needed to enable government policy that supports Lyme-like patients. The growth rates in other countries provide an indication Lyme disease will not go away. The recently announced Medical Research Future Fund allocation of \$10 million provides an opportunity to act upon the research recommendations provided by the Clinical Advisory Committee on Lyme Disease and prioritise funding for research into what is becoming a global epidemic.

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The Lyme Disease Association of Australia calls on the federal Health Minister Sussan Ley to take a timely leadership role and consult with patients in order to progress this important opportunity to develop a way forward to prevent, diagnose and treat this chronic disease.

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Media contact and interviews: media@lymedisease.org.au

Lyme Disease Association of Australia's media kit: www.lymedisease.org.au/media

Research study: <http://www.parasitesandvectors.com/content/8/1/345/abstract>