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MEDIA RELEASE

Australian health authorities discuss a training gap, while the patients provide a solution

Minister Hunt held a forum on 18th April 2018 to consider the outcomes of the Senate inquiry into 'The growing evidence of an emerging tick-borne disease that causes a Lyme like illness for many Australian patients'. He heard from patient advocacy group the Lyme Disease Association of Australia (LDAA) that patients need treatment from practitioners who are both compassionate and trained to treat this complex and poorly understood disease. The Australian public health system does not currently have training for practitioners who see patients with a Lyme-like illness.

While Lyme disease is still not currently officially recognised in Australia, the need for effective, best practice treatment is ever present as a large number of patients continue to visit their practitioners with all the symptoms of this life-threatening illness. Recognising this overwhelming need, the LDAA now offers world-class training for Australian health practitioners through the new Lyme-Ed initiative.

The LDAA understands that effective Lyme treatment requires an integrative approach. LDAA CEO, Sharon Whiteman says; 'I am delighted that Lyme disease training is now available in Australia. Lyme-Ed is a comprehensive 20-hour online course compiled by the trusted naturopath Dr Nicola Ducharme.'

Dr Nicola Ducharme is a Naturopathic Doctor who trained as a naturopath in her home country of Australia before earning her Doctorate in Naturopathic Medicine at the prestigious Bastyr University in Seattle and opening her private practice in San Diego in 2003. As founder and medical director of RestorMedicine, she specialises in working with individuals with chronic Lyme disease.

Dr. Nicola has written four books on the subject of Lyme disease - *The Lyme Diet*, *The Beginners Guide to Lyme Disease*, *Lyme Disease in Australia* and *Lyme Brain*, and has been featured as a Lyme expert in Connie Strasheim's books on Lyme disease.

LDAA CEO Sharon Whiteman says; “The LDAA has worked closely with Dr Nicola for many years. She is a trusted authority on Lyme disease and we admire her knowledge and generosity in sharing her considerable expertise in treating Lyme disease through the Lyme-Ed resource.”

“It is a complex condition that is not well understood in Australia. Many of the handful of practitioners who treat must travel to the US to receive training. LDAA is making it easier for them to receive that training here. Patients also struggle to understand the illness. I wish personally I had this resource to support my own journey to recovery. Most patients spend months if not years trying to understand this disease. With Lyme-Ed we are able to make the tragic and debilitating Lyme journey just that little bit better.”

The online training addresses the nuances patients and practitioners face every day including: what to do if antibiotics stop working; strategies for emotional healing and ways to break through detrimental neural pathways; and 10 key factors that can hinder recovery.

There’s also modules on why detoxification is so crucial and how to best support it; how to adjust nutrition to reduce inflammation; and how to manage the symptoms that are so common in Lyme including pain, mood imbalances, cognitive deficits and fatigue.

“The LDAA receives emails every day from desperately unwell people asking for help to understand their disease. Patients also need help finding a practitioner who is able to treat them as practitioners are most often not trained or reluctant to ask for help due to the Lyme stigma,” Ms Whiteman adds.

Many doctors are intimidated by medical authorities who insist the American disease cannot be acquired in Australia. Currently, the Australian health authorities continue to focus only on the strain of the bacterium *Borrelia* which causes Lyme disease in the USA. But the LDAA asserts the locally acquired Lyme-like illness which is currently affecting so many Australians could be caused by a *Borrelia* which is unique to Australia. An absence of investment in up to date medical research should not be misrepresented as evidence that the disease is not in Australia.

The LDAA is in contact with patients all around Australia who become sick after a tick bite. Health practitioners need training to ensure these patients are not left to either fend for themselves or to go overseas for treatment as many have been forced to do.

Dr Nicola Ducharme is visiting Australia and will be available in Sydney for interviews on 20 April 2018.

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More information about Lyme-Ed is available here: www.lymedisease.org.au/lyme-disease-patient-and-practitioner-training/

Senate inquiry into [The growing evidence of an emerging tick-borne disease that causes a Lyme like illness for many Australian patients'](#)

Additional resources for media are available from the Lyme Disease Association of Australia's website <http://www.lymedisease.org.au/media-and-public-information/>