



Lyme Disease and MS: Similar or Same?

By Miguel Gonzalez, MD, FACP, FCCP

June, 2013 - There has been much debate in the medical community about whether MS and Lyme disease are the same disease or are two different diseases that have similar symptoms. We will look at both theories and you can decide for yourself.

Theory: MS is just a manifestation of Lyme disease

In the 2006 issue of “Medical Hypothesis”, Alan B. MacDonald M.D (Pathologist) strongly supports the fact that Lyme disease is responsible for the development of MS (Multiple Sclerosis) and other diseases. According to MacDonald and several other leading researchers in this field, *Borrelia* infection is a “unifying concept to explain diverse neurodegenerative diseases”, including Lewy body from Parkinson’s disease, Alzheimer plaque and MS. Why do the majority of doctors not believe in this theory? Because they fail to understand that *Borrelia* infection should not be diagnosed only when the corkscrew shaped bacteria are found in the diseased tissue (as it happens in Lyme disease), but also in other patients where the pathologist can detect (with a microscope) the small, cyst form of *Borrelia* in the tissues. Some doctors deny the existence of these cyst forms of *Borrelia* even though they are aware of it. Other researchers accept the concept but have been persecuted academically by their peers, says MacDonald.

Biopsies of the brain have discovered living *Borrelia* bacteria in people diagnosed with MS.

Dr. MacDonald also believes that Big Pharma does not want the public to know the real cause of MS so that they can sell drugs that may relieve some symptoms, but don’t address the root cause of MS (which is the *Borrelia* infection).

Theory: MS and Lyme are different diseases, but share some symptoms

Lyme disease and MS can manifest identical symptoms such as optic neuritis (the inflammation of the optic nerve), motor and sensory loss, vertigo, weakness, memory and mood changes, as well as other neurological symptoms. Both Lyme disease and MS have an autoimmune component, being associated with auto-reactive T cells and auto-antibodies directed against myelin, the protective sheath that covers the nerve fibers. Both diseases can be triggered or aggravated by infections.

However, the promoters of this theory also found enough evidence to believe that these two diseases are different and simply share similar symptoms. Here are the main differences:

- MS has a relapsing–remitting form where symptoms wax and wane, where in Lyme the symptoms tend to be progressive.
- Neurological abnormalities in MS involve the central nervous system, whereas in Lyme disease, a wide spectrum of the nervous system (not just the central nervous system) is affected.
- MS is a typical autoimmune disease where the neurological symptoms of Lyme are only partially mediated by the immune system.
- MS is linked with infections. The Epstein-Barr virus and chlamydia pneumonia are a few of the trigger micro-organisms for these MS infections, not Borrelia, which is responsible for the development of Lyme disease.

Until further research confirms either of these two theories, it is worthwhile to test for both diseases, since the treatments are very different. If a Borrelia infection is found, a course of antibiotic therapy is needed, while MS is managed with immuno-suppressant drugs.

References:

<http://owndoc.com/lyme/multiple-sclerosis-is-lyme-disease-anatomy-of-a-cover-up>

<http://lymemd.blogspot.com/2009/01/doctor-do-i-have-lyme-or-ms.html>

<http://www.vitamincouncil.org/health-conditions/neurological-conditions/multiple-sclerosis>