

LYME & OTHER TICK-BORNE DISEASES: 34 YEARS, FROM LYME, CONNECTICUT ACROSS THE NATION

A SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE JOINTLY SPONSORED BY THE NATIONAL LYME DISEASE ASSOCIATION AND
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS



Pat Smith, President of the Lyme Disease Association thanks Congressman Chris Smith for his many years of dedication in fighting Lyme disease. United States Congressman Chris Smith of New Jersey speaks during the conference.

On Friday, October 23, 2009 the Lyme Disease Association and the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons jointly hosted this 2009 Lyme disease conference at the Gaylord National Hotel in National Harbor, Maryland. LDA President Pat Smith opened the conference with a brief history of Lyme across the nation. The CDC's Dr. Ben Beard, Chief, Bacterial Diseases Branch and Associate Director for Vector-Borne Diseases, followed as keynote speaker. Lyme disease researcher and University of North Florida Associate Professor of Epidemiology and Environmental Health Dr. Kerry Clark then presented a fitting memorial lecture to honor the late Dr. Ed Masters; his fascinating lecture focused on Southern Tick-Borne Infections. Dr. Susan Little, DVM and Professor at Oklahoma State University gave an interesting presentation entitled "Dogs as Sentinels of Tick-Borne Infection." Dr. Christopher Earnhart of the Medical College of Virginia at VA Commonwealth University then described the recent progress in the development of a Lyme disease vaccine.

Dr. X. Frank Yang of Indiana University School of Medicine discussed the genetic regulation of *Borrelia* genes and Dr. Richard Marconi, Professor of Microbiology and Immunology from the Medical College of Virginia at VA Commonwealth University, gave an interesting explanation of some of the mechanisms spirochetes employ to evade the immune system.

After the lunch break, Dr. Amiram Katz, Associate Professor from the Department of Neurology at Yale University, presented "IV Immunoglobulin and Autoimmune Disease in Lyme Peripheral Neuropathy." Professor of Psychoneuroimmunology Dr. Robert Dantzer of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, gave one of the most talked-about lectures regarding the role of cytokines in inflammation and sickness behavior. Dr. Phyllis Faust then discussed a fatal case of Tick-borne encephalitis. Dr. Faust

is an Assistant professor of Clinical Pathology at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. Diane M. Gubernot, MPH and Senior Regulatory Scientist at OBRR/CBER/FDA, Division of Emerging and Transfusion-Transmitted Diseases, gave a very interesting presentation on “Babesia Infection and the US Donor Blood Supply.”

A fascinating lecture was delivered by Dr. Peter Hildenbrand, Clinical Instructor at Harvard Medical School’s Department of Radiology. He discussed, “Lyme Neuroborreliosis: the Great Neuroimaging Imitator.” Also from Harvard, Dr. John Costello, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, lectured about Lyme carditis in children.

The final two speakers of the afternoon included Dr. Patrick McAuliffe, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Psychology and Education at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, whose presentation, “Neuropsychological Deficits in Children and the School System” was extremely helpful not only to treating physicians, but to everyone involved in the education of children with LD. Dr. Brian Fallon, Professor of Clinical Psychiatry and Director of the Lyme Disease Research Center at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, then gave a memorial lecture in honor of Dr. John Drulle. Dr. Fallon discussed new research findings on Neuropsychiatric Lyme Disease.



Dr. Brian Fallon (l.), Director of the Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases Research Center at the Columbia University Medical Center presented a memorial lecture in honor of the late Dr. John Drulle.

During the conference, United States Congressman Chris Smith of New Jersey, longtime sponsor of Lyme disease legislation, made a special guest appearance and addressed conference attendees. Lyme Disease President Pat Smith presented him with a plaque to thank him for his many years of dedication in working to write legislation to both prevent tick-borne diseases and to help Lyme and TBD patients across the nation (see photos at top of page).

There were question and answer discussion periods set aside after both morning and afternoon presentations. Many physicians, scientists and Lyme advocates had some great questions for the speakers.

The afternoon ended with a reception for all conference participants and attendees. It was an honor to see so many of the top minds in the field working together to unlock the mysteries of these pathogens.



Pat Smith (r.), President of the national Lyme Disease Association takes time from her busy day to pose for a photo with GA LDA President Liz Schmitz.



After the conference, we got a real treat!
Dr. Kenneth Liegner & his trumpet
joined the band at the Gaylord Hotel, proving he's
not just a wonderful doctor; he's a great musician, too!

In the sharing of the latest scientific and medical information about Lyme and Tick-borne diseases, it is evident we are making strides in learning about these illnesses. But there is so much more to discover. With more funding, discoveries would be made more quickly and could help tick-borne disease patients who continue to suffer. This important conference reminded us all of the serious issues we face as a nation in dealing with emerging TBD infections and how crucial it is to learn all we can about these complex and debilitating organisms.



Borrelia burgdorferi, the bacteria that causes Lyme disease.



Lyme disease rash, *erythema migrans*