Learn about it
Are you aware of Lyme disease?
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Under our Skin



PHOTOS COURTESY ROSSANA MAGNOTTA

Rossana Magnotta with Jim Wilson, president of CanLyme, speak at a press conference. Inset, Rossana with husband Gabe, who died from Lyme disease. Right, a CanLyme poster promoting awareness of the dangers of tick bites.

Spreading awareness about Lyme disease



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Planning an outdoor vacation?

Beware of the "ticking time bomb" — blood-sucking parasites spreading Lyme disease with potentially devastating consequences.

The infectious disease is easier to get than you think and no one is immune, yet too little is being done, says Rossana Magnotta, CEO of Magnotta Winery. "You've got to protect yourself and your children."

Transmitted through a tick that carries a cesspool of infection, Lyme disease is growing.

"People are constantly being misdiagnosed or not diagnosed, and with tragic consequences, including my wonderful husband Gabe," says Magnotta.

Gabe lost his battle in 2009 and Magnotta is fighting to make sure other families are spared the same heartbreak.

Gabe was a trailblazer in the Ontario wine industry and Magnotta is doing the same with combating Lyme disease. The feisty entrepreneur has established the G. Magnotta Foundation for Vector-Borne Diseases (charitable status pending) to support research, accurate testing and proper treatment of this devastating disease.

The foundation is partnering with the new Humber River Hospital in Toronto, opening in 2015, to develop a world-class facility.

"It'll be the Mayo of Canada, when it comes to Lyme disease research," Magnotta says. "We're not out to panic people, just to spread awareness and get accurate testing — that's the biggest hurdle."

Magnotta says she "wants to make it right for other Canadians — no one should suffer through the nightmare we did."

Along with Jim Wilson of the Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation (canlyme.com), they are working hard at getting recognition for a disease that's rarely acknowledged by the medical profession. Many misdiagnosed, chronically ill Canadians actually pay for treatment outside of the country to recover their failing health.

Magnotta took her husband to the U.S. where he tested positive after testing negative here. Rigorous treatment started but it was too late as the disease had taken its toll after seven years. Once an avid, vibrant outdoorsman, "the disease ravaged him physically."

Lyme disease is a Borreliosis and unfortunately Canadian tests are only capable of detecting one species of the Borrelia bacteria. Canada has several Borrelia bacteria species, as shown by Public Health Agency of Canada researchers and Ontario researcher John Scott.

The longer Lyme disease goes untreated, the more difficult it is to treat. Yet Canadian blood tests are notoriously unreliable and flawed. Quick treatment with antibiotics is critical, but left untreated, the disease can cause serious neurological problems.

According to Wilson and Magnotta, misdiagnosis is significant; a percentage of people diagnosed with Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis (MS), Parkinson's, ALS (motor neuron or Lou Gehrig's disease) and fibromyalgia may actually have a misdiagnosed case of Lyme disease.

A Tick Bite Can Cost You Your Life.



Protect yourself against ticks



- Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts. Tuck your pants into your socks to prevent ticks from getting inside your pants.
- Check your clothes for ticks often.
- Wear light-coloured clothing to make it easier to spot ticks.
- Walk on pathways or trails when possible, staying in the middle. Avoid low-lying brush or long grass.
- Apply insect repellent to your skin and clothing.

High-risk areas include:
- Wooded areas
- Nature parks
- Grassy fields
- Beaches



– Courtesy of canlyme.com