LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Time Canadian Medicare system woke up to reality of lyme disease

To the editor:

It's time Canada's Healthcare System took off the blinders and opened its eyes to the reality of Lyme disease in Canada.

In 2012, Vett Lloyd, a professor In the biology department of Mount Allison University in Sackville, made the startling discovery that as many ticks collected in the Sackville area were infected with the Lyme Disease bacteria as in the known endemic regions around Saint John. In a press release by Mount Allison Lloyd went on to say "the risk of contracting Lyme disease in New Brunswick is increasing".

But as alarming as that statistic may be, there is yet more to the story. Transmission to humans may be about to get easier and may no longer be simply a concern for the outdoor enthusiast. The following point to the fact that Canada's health care system needs to take the threat seriously.

Resistance to DEET is now showing up in mosquitoes. James Logan and his colleagues from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine studied the effects of DEET on mosquitoes and discovered they have adapted to it. (http://www.naturalnews.com/039376_mosquitoes_deet_resistance.html#ixzz2MsMwXWNK). It appears that mosquitoes are adapting much the same as microbes have adapted to some antibiotics.

And for those who don't frequent marshes but whose jobs require them to travel and stay in hotels, you cannot assume safety, for there is an entirely new wrinkle. Bedbugs are now suspected of carrying Borreliosis infection as well. To quote one article from lymdiseaseguide.org, a review of the literature by Delauney, et al (2011), determined that bedbugs had the apparent capacity to act as vectors for transmitting forty-five pathogens but that the proof available to support such cases varied substantially in terms of quality and quantity."

Indeed bedbugs have already been found to be carriers of other infections. According to researchers Lowe and Romney who recently published findings that bedbugs in the downtown eastside of Vancouver carried MRSA (methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) and vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus faecium (VRE).

All of these factors do not auger well for getting under control a disease that is barely acknowledged by our present healthcare system.

By Health Canada's own admission - Canada's response to the threat in the form of diagnostics is lacking (CANLYME.com). The ELISA test currently being run as a standard is sorely lacking in specificity and sensitivity for the infection. With its poor track record in these areas it's surprising it hasn't been tossed out but it continues to be used as the marker for further testing. The Western Blot, which is a much more accurate test method is only used if the patient is deemed infected by ELISA method. Why does Canada continue to subject the public to low-level inaccurate testing methods when better tests are available? Why indeed? It would seem that money is the motivating factor for this ill-conceived plan to handle this looming crisis to our Healthcare system.

The final player in this ever-expanding vortex at the doorstep of our Healthcare system is the role of doctors. Doctors need to recognize many things about Lyme disease and the first rule of diagnosing Lyme disease is that Lyme does not have a "face" so to speak. It can present in a multitude of body systems and disguise itself as a plethora of diseases and in only 40 per cent of cases will it present with a bulls-eye rash.

Lyme disease has power - but it is handed its greatest power and wreaks its best havoc when we ignore the threat.

Without judicious monitoring and early ACCURATE diagnoses, the disease can bring untold suffering. It can ruin the University career of the most intelligent among us. It can fell the vibrant and promising human capital of youth. It can destroy hopes and plans and dreams. It can wipe out the entire hard-earned savings of a family. It can turn healthy, vigorous and active members of the workforce into outpatients in a matter of months dependent on care by relatives.

Lyme Disease can obliterate the retirement savings of a lifetime. And left undiagnosed and untreated it can leave its sufferers impoverished, living in a body ravaged by chronic ill health, wracked by pain, and robbed of the "golden years".

And for the number crunchers among us - left unchecked, Lyme disease has the power to reduce productivity, raise disability rates, fill nursing homes with the young and chronically ill and compromise the economy.

Canada needs a radical change in how it views this impending healthcare crisis if there will ever be any hope of stopping it in its tracks. Canada must reject old, ineffective testing methods and train its doctors to screen for the many symptoms that Lyme will present, because ticks don't recognize borders and the reality of global travel assures us that travel will bring us more than just souvenirs.

My hat goes off to one province that is taking a pro-active approach, British Columbia, which has opened its first clinic for the treatment of Lyme and other diseases - the Complex Chronic Disease Program (CCDP) assists people with fibromyalgia, myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome and tick borne illnesses, such as Lyme disease.

If Canada's healthcare system developers are unsure of where to begin this task, they can ask me - because I AM that Lyme disease sufferer referenced in a previous paragraph.

To fail to act would be a travesty.

Stephanie Stoneleigh
Memramcook, N.B.

Oulton deserving of recent honour

To the editor:

Jolicure's Charlotte Oulton is a most deserving recipient of the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Charlotte does not seek the limelight, but works and witnesses patiently and persistently away from the headlines.

Many are the youth who have benefited from her quiet determined leadership.

And not only the youth. And not only through 4-H.

Charlotte has been and remains a solid and consistent force for a better world in and around Jolicure.

It is wonderful that her contributions are noted!

Eldon Hay,
Sackville, N.B.

THE GREEN BACKPACK

Former New Orleans director of city planning to speak in Sackville

SUBMITTED BY TREVOR DONALD

Would we do better here in Canada at coping with a crisis like Katrina? We have not yet been tested, but the US experience in New Orleans, or in New York after Hurricane Sandy, should give us no cause for complacency.

The ordered prescriptions of city planning were never intended to be put under such stress. Only then do you discover what your city is really made of.

On Thursday, March 28, there will be a public speaking lecture by Kristina Ford. Ford was the director of city planning for New Orleans from 1992 until 2000.

You may recall Hurricane Katrina and Rita hit the city in 2005 with devastating effects; the city today is still recovering after the levees built to protect the city from flooding failed.

The talk will take place at 7 p.m. in the Dunn Building, room 113 - The Wu Centre, at Mount Allison University.

I had a chance to call Ford and speak to her ahead of the talk. She has been in a unique position to use her experience to engage discussions and write a book on the realities of city planning.

In *The Trouble with City Planning*, she uses the experience of rebuilding New Orleans after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina as a case study on why city planners are in trouble, and what they can do about it.

Ford's advice for optimal city planning process can translate well to Canada. City planning here has some similarities for a number of reasons — and it's just not levees and dykes.

She compares planners in New Brunswick to the planners she talks about in her book: "Planners in New Brunswick have problems like planners have everywhere. I think the trouble is planners have not tapped into the political system and got the ear of lawmakers to help cities prepare for climate change.

Planning today can seem to be mostly about accommodating development at any cost because cities rely on property taxes for their budgets, and therefore are predisposed to approve growth without considering other consequences."

Governments should, however, be trying to deal with the very real future problems of sea-level rise and increased storm frequencies in coastal areas. Most of us know of the tragic failure of multiple levels of government to respond adequately to Hurricane Katrina, thus compounding the losses caused by nature and engineering failures in New Orleans.

When asked what's different in the rebuilding of New Orleans, she replied, Adaptation to the realities of likely future flooding has not been included in recent city plans for New Orleans.

"There was a first plan presented for rebuilding that was based on the likelihood of future flooding, but when the public saw this initial plan, they hated it because the plan would not result in rebuilding the city the way it had been before the storm.

"The reaction of the public was so strongly negative that local leaders directed that subsequent plans be guided by the premise that the city would be the same as it had been before the storm. This means the city continues to be reliant on technology and strength of the levee system.

"Even though many flaws in the levees that were revealed by the great storm have been addressed, land use has not changed since the storm."

Ford also points out the cultural connection to the environment in New Orleans, where "everybody knows the river could flood.

"There is a local saying in New Orleans: what the river gives the river takes away. Everybody living here knows exactly what that means - that they live in a fragile environment. If society is going to take control of the future, science needs to get closer to policy-makers and make good argument.

For example, people discount the probability of a '500-year storm', not realizing a city could suffer such a storm five years in a row.

With each passing year without a storm as large as Katrina, New Orleanians discount the probability it will happen again.

In a sort of gambler's fallacy, in which they gradually return to relying on the flawed understanding that it'll be 499 years before the next 500-year storm occurs."

Ford now lives in Maine with her husband and holds a PhD in urban and regional planning from the University of Michigan, and was, until her full-time entry into public service in 1983, associate professor in the Graduate School of Public Administration at NYU.

From 2010 to 2011, Ford was chief of staff for New Orleans' deputy mayor in charge of public facilities, infrastructure and community development.

She is currently a professor in the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University in New York City.

The upcoming talk is being sponsored by Mount Allison's department of geography and environment and RCE (Regional Centre of Expertise) Tantramar.

Trevor Donald is the student communications intern with RCE Tantramar, a Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development. He is also a student at Mount Allison University, where he is studying geography and environment.

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