

Dear Representatives,

I was not able to submit my testimony prior to Tues. but I hope you will still take the time to read my story.

I was bitten by a tick around 1970 in the Eugene/Springfield area. I remember the Bulls Eye rash and becoming sick for several weeks with no explanation. At that time no one knew what Lyme Disease was and there was no form of treatment. I went into remission until I was in my early 30's and then the symptoms returned with a vengeance.

I continued to seek medical help for 12 years and was finally diagnosed with Fibromyalgia, I was 44 years old at the time. I could no longer work as a contract administrator for a large construction company in Eugene and was forced to quit. My health continued to decline over the next 14 years before I was finally diagnosed with Lyme Disease. Since that time I was bitten by a 2nd tick in the Eugene area and I have been diagnosed with Babesia, a co-infection to Lyme. I suspect the Babesia resulted from the first tick bite due to the symptoms I have been suffering with all of these years. My numbers are very high and at this time there is no way to know how long my treatment will last or for that matter if it will be successful. The best I can hope for is remission.

When I received the 2nd tick bite I went to Urgent Care. The Health Dept told my Dr. that I had to be tested immediately prior to treatment! Since it takes 4-6 weeks for antibodies to form and they are using the Elisa test which has a high false negative failure rate the State is accumulating 100's of false negative reports. The Dr. also told me that people bring in their ticks to be tested, she has submitted them to the State and the State refuses to test them and told her not to send in any more. So basically the Health Dept in this State wants to maintain the illusion that Lyme disease does not exist here.

I was recently contacted by the Lane County Health Dept. due to the Babesia diagnosis. The nurse indicated to me that there were no other reported cases of Babesia in Lane County. I told her my history but I told her that I do not believe this is rare since no one is testing for it. We as patients are just told we have Fibromyalgia, ALS, MS and Parkinson's disease just to name a few. There are 1,000's if not 100's of thousands of misdiagnosed cases all over the world so why would Oregon be an exception?

The bottom line is that I have Chronic Lyme and at least one co-infection. I drive 3 hours one way to see a Dr. for treatment, since this is so exhausting I am paying for a hotel for one night before I return. This is very typical in Oregon for those who are fortunate enough to finally be diagnosed but then the financial and logistical nightmares begin. Many patients leave the State to seek care in States who have updated their treatment guidelines and recognize that these conditions cannot be treated in 30 days when the disease has become chronic.

It is time for radical changes in Oregon's health care system. No one should have to suffer for 40 years before finding out what is wrong with them. Then add the burden of seeking medical help in another town or state because of politics and a shortage of educated Drs. This is not an illness I brought on myself by poor eating, substance abuse, lack of exercise, etc. This illness can happen to anyone! In addition to all the physical and financial hardships our family is already dealing with my daughter and husband will also soon be tested for the diseases I carry. Unfortunately this disease can be sexually transmitted and passed from mother to fetus, so the nightmare continues. In addition our blood supplies are at risk because donors are never tested for tick born diseases.

Please step up to the plate and become educated about this travesty in our state and around the world. Join some Lyme Disease Face Book groups and find out what is going on in patients lives on a daily basis. Or research the 100's of articles online and find out that it does not have to be this way.

Please contact me if you would like more information or specific websites to review. Thank you for taking the time to read my story.

Sincerely,

Colleen Witzel  
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