

F O R E W O R D

by Robert C Bransfield, M.D., D.L.F.A.P.A.



*Lyme Brain: The impact of Lyme disease
on your brain and how to reclaim your smarts!*

I would like to thank Nicola McFadzean Ducharme, N.D. for taking on the effort to write *Lyme Brain: The impact of Lyme disease on your brain and how to reclaim your smarts!* More attention is needed on the mental symptoms associated with Lyme/tick-borne disease, and books addressing the mental symptoms are very much needed. Patients and family members need to be better informed on this subject.

Treating the mental symptoms seen with Lyme and associated diseases is both frustrating and rewarding. It is frustrating due to the complexity of these conditions and the obstacles that exist in the healthcare system, but it is also very rewarding when we can help patients navigate through multiple obstacles and improve from chronic debilitating symptoms. We were educated with very basic disease models that are insufficient when dealing with more complex diseases with multiple contributors, multiple pathophysiological processes and multiple symptom presentations. Multiple scientific disciplines need to be integrated to understand and effectively treat these conditions.

Microbes in our external and internal environment have a significant effect upon our health, and infections can have a significant impact upon our mental health even when they do not penetrate into the central nervous system. Psychiatric illness is always caused by something, and these causes need to be better understood. There are many who instead see psychiatric symptoms as a diagnosis by default when they cannot explain the cause of a symptom. Invariably, clinicians who follow this belief system lack sufficient training in tick-borne diseases, psychodynamics and neurophysiology, which explains an inability to understand the pathophysiology of mental symptoms. Our mental adaptive capabilities have been perfected by many years of evolution, and mental symptoms and mental illnesses do not spontaneously occur without a clear and significant cause. Although emotional trauma plays a

contributing role in the etiology of some mental illness, a large number of mental illnesses are caused by physical injury to our nervous system from unknown and known causes, which often include infections and immune reactions to these infections. However, what causes a disease may not be the same as what causes that same disease to progress or persist, and these issues must be addressed as well. Implementing a multi-systems approach pulls together the components from multiple scientific disciplines that allow us to adapt to the complexity of these conditions.

When Polly Murray first drew attention to an epidemic of illness in Lyme, Connecticut, the physician investigating the outbreak was a rheumatologist. Since then, other rheumatologists, infectious disease specialists, bench scientists, microbiologists and others who lack psychiatric capability defined the disease from their limited perspectives and set policy and research planning decisions for the National Institute of Health and the Centers for Disease Control for Lyme disease that failed to incorporate psychiatric considerations. Other countries then follow the lead of these two institutions. To my knowledge, no psychiatrist knowledgeable about Lyme disease has ever been consulted when determining major policy decisions regarding Lyme disease at these institutions.

Although early symptoms are musculoskeletal, most of the later and more significant symptoms are psychiatric, cognitive and neurological. A few hundred articles in the peer-reviewed literature prove the association between neuropsychiatric symptoms and Lyme and other related tick-borne diseases. In spite of this, an influential group of policymakers are loyal to their belief systems based upon a 1970s definition of Lyme disease and discount the brain symptoms as being “subjective, non-specific and psychiatric.” The blindness to comprehend the neuropsychiatric symptoms has stifled research, accurate epidemiology, medical education, patient awareness, treatment effectiveness and adequacy of insurance coverage. As a result, an epidemic of chronic mental illness associated with tick-borne diseases persists, is not being sufficiently addressed, and a large number of patients are feeling abandoned by our healthcare system.

We need humility when dealing with the complexities of Lyme disease. *Borrelia* has been found in ticks in amber in the Dominican Republic that were 15 to 20 million years old. This is an adversary with great adaptive capability. It has existed on this planet much longer than humans. Who has the greater chance of still being on this planet millions of years into the future—humans or *Borrelia*? When dealing with such a formidable adversary, patients need to consider multiple sources of information, do some of their own research, seek more than one opinion and be prepared to advocate for themselves. I hope this book helps to increase your creativity and your curiosity to learn more, and improves the quality of your life and health.

Robert C Bransfield, M.D., D.L.F.A.P.A