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19th February 2007

Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt MP
Secretary of State for Health
Department of Health
Richmond House
Whitehall
London SW1

Dear Ms Hewitt,

Lyme disease, also known as Lyme borreliosis*, in the United Kingdom.

The charity Lyme Disease Action is seeking government action upon the increasing problem that Lyme disease, also known as Lyme borreliosis, is causing in the UK. Many patients with clinical syndromes caused by Lyme borreliosis are going undiagnosed and untreated often with tragic consequences.

We believe there should be great concern about the rise in cases of Lyme disease and the lack of widespread recognition that this disease is here and becoming much more common. The Health Protection Agency only has estimates of total numbers of cases and there is compelling evidence that these are too low. Our trustees are in daily contact with a constant stream of people who have symptoms that are suggestive of this disease. Many of these people are undiagnosed or misdiagnosed as having another condition. Without prompt, adequate and appropriate treatment the disease can progress to cause a state of chronic ill health or even death. The best defence against such an outcome is to give prompt and adequate treatment that goes beyond symptom resolution. We are finding that if these people do receive this treatment, many respond well.

We feel very strongly that this situation should not be allowed to persist and that government has a duty to act in this matter. Our publication 'Ten steps to better control of Lyme disease' outlines a suggested way forward and we have enclosed this. Our charity feels that many of these steps are overdue and that the Department of Health needs to tackle the problems caused by this disease with urgency. This is reflected in the current Early Day Motion 874 calling for Lyme disease to be made notifiable. This EDM is wholly supported by this charity. We would be glad to have your response to these issues.

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Woodcock
Chair
Lyme Disease Action

*Using the term Lyme borreliosis with both the 'sensu stricto' and 'sensu lato' meanings.