

from Leslie Feinberg August 2011 transgenderwarrior.org
my research notes on the medical politics driving the “Lyme Wars”

Part 21:

Patients and clinical doctors unite in historic coalition

The demand by three advocacy organizations--the New Jersey-based Lyme Disease Association, the Connecticut-based Time for Lyme and the California Lyme Disease Association—pressured Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal to investigate the powerful Infectious Diseases Society of [North] America (IDSA).

The resulting May 1, 2008 statement by Blumenthal’s office said that the Attorney General had found “undisclosed financial interests held by several of the most powerful IDSA panelists.”

The International Lyme And Associated Diseases Society (ILADS) noted: “No violation of antitrust laws was noted; however, the statement continued to refer to the action as an ‘antitrust investigation.’”

The use of “anti-trust” was watched carefully by capitalist monopoly interests.

ILADS stated, “Antitrust attorney Judith Harris of the Washington, D.C. law firm of Reed Smith, discussed the legal implications of the case on Mondaq.com: ‘[This] matter should serve to reinforce how carefully associations must tread when their actions might adversely impact competition and thus, might implicate antitrust laws.’

Yet where is the demand for more research, accurate testing and effective treatments?

Instead, Dr. Jerome O. Klein, professor of pediatrics at Boston University, expresses his concern about patient activism: “In an opinion essay on the attorney general’s action, Jerome O. Klein worried about the possibility that the IDSA case ‘sets a precedent for politicians representing the views of aggrieved constituents to challenge the recommendations and guidelines of professional societies.’ He called for close monitoring of the situation to ‘assure that the process and the science are not subverted by advocacy groups or their political representatives.’” (ilads.org)

ILADS concluded, “Professional societies that publish treatment standards are paying close attention to the IDSA case, as medical and legal scholars.”

According to a reference in an editorial on the website of the Connecticut Business News Journal, “Researchers at Yale, UCONN and across the country did try to convince Blumenthal to withdraw” what this pro-business journal calls “his attack on the scientific group.” (contact.com)

In a June 17, 2001 article about the “Lyme wars” in the New York Times, David Grann

observed, “The scientific world, of course, has always been consumed by feuds.”

Grann, then a senior editor at the New Republic magazine, pointed out, “In the 19th century, the Hungarian physician Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis was eviscerated by the medical community for his seemingly obvious recommendation that physicians sterilize their hands before treating patients.”

However, “In the past,” Grann noted, “most medical feuds have pitted doctor against doctor, scientist against scientist, hypothesis against hypothesis.

“The new struggle, which has become one of the fiercest in memory, not only pits physician against physician but also patient advocates—and in tow, thousands of citizens and a coterie of powerful politicians—against much of the medical establishment.”

Here the Times article concisely states what gave rise to the struggle:

“The rise of the Lyme disease movement—a popular torrent fueled by mass communication on the Internet as well as by cost-cutting insurance companies and bureaucratic H.M.O.’s—has become a prototype of the modern medical lobby.”

Next: Turning point in Lyme wars