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For Immediate Release

**RESEARCHERS DISCOVER COMMON BACTERIAL STRAIN CAUSING LYME IN U.S. AND EUROPE:  
*Stony Brook University Medical Center investigators hopeful that discovery will spur progress in  
diagnostic, treatment protocols***

**Greenwich, CT, August 2008** – Researchers at Stony Brook University Medical Center, led by Dr. Benjamin Luft and supported by the Lyme Disease Association and the National Institutes of Health, have discovered a single common strain of the bacteria that causes Lyme disease in the U.S. and Europe. This strain has been associated with more severe Lyme disease and its identification on both sides of the Atlantic suggests that it is highly adaptable and may be responsible for the increase in symptomatic Lyme disease cases over the past decade, the researchers hypothesize.

Lyme disease advocacy groups, including Time for Lyme's Diane Blanchard, have hailed the findings as a "giant step" in the direction of developing more effective diagnostic and treatment tools for patients suffering from Chronic Lyme disease. "In the medical world today, the discovery of such a specific causal link in any disease is often the genesis of a new understanding regarding its pathology, which can then lead to new theories about diagnosing it more quickly and treating it more effectively," Blanchard explains. She notes that the crux of the issue in Chronic Lyme disease is twofold: No conclusive test exists to confirm the presence of the disease, and no effective protocol has been widely approved to treat it.

Dr. Luft concurs that the results of the study, which appears in the July 2008 edition of the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases* ([www.cdc.gov/ncidod/eid/upcoming.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/eid/upcoming.htm)), potentially significant. "I believe this discovery will make an important contribution since it identifies an identical and virulent clone of *Borrelia* in both Europe and North America," said Dr. Luft. "This may explain the recent spread of Lyme disease in North America." What's more, the researchers were able to conclude that the transmigration of the bacteria occurred recently, leading to the belief that this strain – called the ospC-A clone – is responsible for up to 30% of all systemic Lyme disease cases. Dr. Luft adds, the biggest take away from our findings for Lyme patients is that certain strains of *Borrelia* may cause more disease than others and that these same strains may be more adaptable and capable of spreading throughout a diverse environment.

Lyme disease is the most prevalent tickborne disease in the U.S., with approximately 20,000 new cases diagnosed each year – and countless cases undiagnosed or misdiagnosed. Time for Lyme's Blanchard notes, "The early symptoms of Lyme disease are so similar to the flu, chronic fatigue syndrome and a host of other common maladies that it is often incumbent upon the patient to insist upon a series of complicated assays in order to rule out the likelihood of Lyme."

Blanchard notes that in certain regions where Lyme disease is considered endemic – including Long Island and Connecticut, where cases have nearly doubled in just a few years – doctors may be more likely to consider the possibility of *Borrelia burgdorferi* infection. However, the next hurdle – an effective treatment protocol – can be even more of a challenge, as controversy continues to swirl around the practice of long-term antibiotic treatment for Chronic Lyme sufferers.

“As always, prevention and early detection are the best ‘medicine’ for Lyme disease,” Blanchard notes. “People can best protect themselves by wearing long clothing and insect repellent when outdoors in areas where ticks may be present, checking themselves, their children and their pets for ticks after spending time outdoors, and seeking immediate medical attention if they suspect a tick bite or see a red ‘bulls-eye’ rash anywhere on their skin,” she concludes.

#### **About Time for Lyme**

Time for Lyme is an organization dedicated to eliminating the devastating effects of Lyme disease and other tick-borne illness. Our mission is to prevent the spread of disease, develop definitive diagnostic tools and effective treatments, and to ultimately find a cure for tick-borne illness by supporting research, education, and the acquisition and dissemination of information. In addition, we will continue to act as advocates for Lyme disease sufferers and their families through support of legislative reform on the federal, state and local levels. For more information on our organization, please visit [www.timeforlyme.org](http://www.timeforlyme.org). For more information on the Vermont 200-mile Endurance Run, go to [www.newenglandultras.com](http://www.newenglandultras.com).