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The Evidence Base for Lyme Infection-Associated Chronic Illnesses Treatment

Guest Speakers

Ben Nemser, Ph.D., M.B.A.
Chief Program Officer, Steven & Alexandra Cohen Foundation

Dr. Ben Nemser manages the Steven and Alexandra Cohen Foundation's various health portfolios including the Cohen Lyme & Tickborne Disease Initiative. Dr. Nemser has a PhD in Public Health with extensive experience in global health systems in developing countries and related research. Prior to joining the Foundation, Ben was a Senior Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Consultant for UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO). After receiving a Master of Public Health from Columbia University, Ben worked for Columbia University as an Epidemiologist and Data Systems Manager. In addition to his public health experience, Ben has a Master's in Business Administration and a background in governmental finance and budgeting.

Lyle R. Peterson, M.D., M.P.H.
Director, Division of Vector-Borne Diseases, CDC

Dr. Lyle R. Petersen, is the director of the Division of Vector-Borne Diseases (DVBD) in the National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID). DVBD, located in Fort Collins, Colorado, supports CDC's mission to protect the American public from emerging and endemic bacterial and viral pathogens spread by mosquitoes, ticks, fleas, and other vectors. Dr. Petersen earned his medical degree from the University of California, San Francisco. His career at CDC began in the Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) in 1985. After his EIS training, he joined CDC's Division of HIV/AIDS where he worked until 1995. During that time, he completed CDC's Preventive Medicine Residency Program, received a Master of Public Health degree from Emory University, and served in several posts, including the Chief of the HIV Seroepidemiology Branch. In 1996, Dr. Petersen accepted an assignment in Germany where he helped guide that country's efforts in creating a new national infectious disease epidemiology program at the Robert Koch Institute in Berlin. In 2000, he returned to the United States to serve as the Deputy Director for Science of the DVBD, and he became the division's Director in 2004. Dr. Petersen also served on the National Security Staff at the White House during the Ebola Response and was the Incident Manager of the Zika Response at CDC.

Nadine Bowden, D.V.M., Ph.D.
Program Officer for Lyme Disease and Other Borrelioses, NIAID

Dr. Nadine Bowden has served as the Program Officer for Lyme disease and other Borrelioses at the National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) since 2022. Prior to joining NIAID, Dr. Bowden worked at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Center for Devices and Radiological Health (CDRH) as a scientific reviewer in the Division of Microbiology Devices (DMD) where her portfolio included regulatory review of in vitro diagnostics for the diagnosis of Lyme disease. Dr. Bowden has served on the programmatic review panel of the Department of Defense (DOD) Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP) for the Tick-Borne Disease Research Program (TBDRP) and is currently serving as a judge in the LymeX Diagnostic Prize. Dr. Bowden received her D.V.M. from Michigan State University in 2002. She completed her veterinary anatomic pathology residency and received her Ph.D. from The Ohio State University in 2011.

Kristen Honey, Ph.D., M.A., P.M.P.
Chief Data Scientist, HHS

Dr. Kristen Honey leads partnerships and innovation for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health. Her "InnovationX" team tackles complex challenges by harnessing the power of open data, open science, open source, open innovation—prizes, community science, crowdsourcing, challenges—and public-private partnerships for health. Priorities include improving the community's experiences with government services using the novel HHS Health+™ human-centered design program and customer experience (CX) methods. Dr. Honey co-founded the HHS Lyme Innovation initiative that includes a $25M LymeX partnership between HHS and the Steven & Alexandra Cohen Foundation for patient-centered innovation, education, and diagnostics. Dr. Honey served as the inaugural Vice Chair of the Tick-Borne Disease Working Group (TBDWG, 2017–2019) and co-authored the 2018 TBDWG Report to Congress. Subsequently, she served as the Co-Chair for the interagency process to develop the National Public Health Strategy to Prevent and Control Vector-Borne Diseases in People, published by HHS in 2024. Prior to joining HHS, Dr. Honey worked in the White House Office of Science and Technology (OSTP), advising the U.S. Chief Technology Officer from 2015–2017. She also worked in the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB), advising the Federal Chief Information Officer from 2017–2018. Dr. Honey earned her Ph.D. at Stanford University in the Emmett Interdisciplinary Program in Environment and Resources (E-IPER) with depth areas in biology and economics, plus a Ph.D. Minor in Civil and Environmental Engineering.