

# Petition

We, the undersigned, are gravely concerned by the new Infectious Disease Society's (IDSA) guidelines on Lyme disease. These guidelines call for absolute reliance upon either the presentation of an *Erythema migrans* rash or positive serologic blood tests to diagnose Lyme disease and recommend severely limited courses of antibiotic treatment when either a rash or a positive test are present. They take the place of a longstanding policy of deference to the clinical discretion of the treating physician in both diagnosing and treating the disease. We find it most troubling that the new IDSA guidelines fail to explain the scientific justifications for their absolute reliance upon the rash and current blood testing to diagnose the disease in light of the numerous studies and medical opinions concluding that the rash is either not discovered by or present in many infected persons and that the serologic testing methods recommended by the IDSA are inherently unreliable because they do not even remotely approach a dispositive level of accuracy. Widespread adoption of these guidelines by practitioners, insurers, and government entities will, therefore, cause real and egregious harm to many patients by inhibiting physicians who otherwise would be free to clinically diagnose and treat this disease.

These guidelines fail to meaningfully address the needs of patients with chronic Lyme disease, who are now relegated to the pile of diseases with unknown etiology, like CFS and FMS, and who are provided with only symptomatic relief, while the underlying infectious disease is allowed to progress unabated. Studies have shown that patients with chronic Lyme disease suffer a degree of debility equal to that of patients with congestive heart failure. Failure to address the underlying infectious disease etiology keeps these patients sick, which is inhumane and immoral. There are no chronic Lyme disease patient studies supporting symptomatic therapies, which presumably would be necessary for life at considerable cost to insurers and society. Moreover, the IDSA rejected out-of-hand the requests by patients and their treating physicians to participate in the guideline development process. No medical society should be able to dictate patient

healthcare through exclusionary guidelines that ignore considerable scientific evidence and fail to meet the basic goal of medicine—to improve the quality of life of the patient.

Currently we have over 45,000 signatures.