



Lyme Disease Association, Inc.

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This One's For You, Nick.....

Every movement has memorable faces which help to define its progress. Not many are better known within the Lyme movement than Dr. Nick Harris. In my years of travel, I have heard Dr. Harris' name mentioned with gratitude and respect by patients, treating physicians, and researchers alike. However, he is sometimes alluded to like the feared adversary in the Harry Potter series, "he who must not be named," by anti-chronic Lyme adversaries, and is referred instead to as "that lab guy in California," or "that guy on the west coast who diagnoses Lyme patients." Why the dichotomy in reputation? Dr. Harris is a true champion of Lyme patients and his passion, commitment, and dedication to the science of the cause are legendary.

Unfortunately, those attributes are not viewed favorably by those who relegate Lyme disease to a simple infection easily cured by 14 days of antibiotics.

Dr. Harris is a scientist, first and foremost. His training, experience, and business acumen have enabled him to establish IGeneX, a specialty lab which deals in tick-borne diseases testing. The testing controversy is at the heart of the Lyme disease issue with outdated testing methods continuing to be mandated by the government, causing a vast amount of under diagnosing and delayed treatment. Because of his testing expertise, he took a dissenting stand in 1994 in Dearborn, Michigan, challenging the Lyme testing decision reached there by a panel which allowed no dissention, but decreed only the use of specific bands adopted there in Lyme disease testing — the only bands used by CDC as the standard for 19 years now.

Understanding the diagnostic dilemma faced by treating physicians and patients alike, Dr. Harris developed tests which use more than just one lab strain of *borrelia*, which increases sensitivity. Additionally, he publishes the actual band results of the western blot as part of the results, rather than just a simple positive or negative, allowing Lyme literate physicians to interpret the data for clinical relevance.

Nick Harris is a humanitarian. He has often reached out to help patients and families of patients in need. Often, he will help patients attend important meetings on tick-borne diseases but who lack the financial ability to do so, and he established a fund for those who require testing. He's been personally available for patients and their physicians, charting the best course of diagnostic action when addressing so many new tick-borne diseases and navigating the waters of immunology, a field he knows so well.

He lends a helping hand to other organizations struggling to spread the word on tick-borne diseases. He has served uncompensated as a member of the LDA's Scientific and Professional Advisory Board and IGeneX is a publication supporter of the LDA's *LymeR Primer* and *ABCs of Lyme Disease*. He has also lent a hand to other patient non-profits in their missions, especially the California-based LymeDisease.org, an organization with which LDA is proud to be affiliated.

Dr. Harris initiated the formation of ILADS, and with the help of the late Theresa MacKnight, organized the first professional group whose initial goals were to help physicians understand the diagnosis and treatment of tick-borne diseases (TBD). Nick contacted the LDA to provide input and help into that formation. My first comment was, it's about time! LDA understood the significance of such an organization and lent a hand by contacting doctors throughout the US who had been primarily struggling alone to diagnose and treat patients. Through letters and phone calls, we suggested it would be beneficial to them to join this new organization led by such a renown laboratorian. Dr. Harris successfully applied the same enthusiasm to this daunting task as he had to his other efforts against TBDs as is evident here today.

Over the past 15 years, LDA has asked him to attend many meetings to move the Lyme field forward. Several had the potential to shape Lyme disease policy including speaking before the NJ Congressional Delegation in 1998, at a Congressional conference in Pennsylvania; in Harrisburg before the PA House Insurance Committee; at a meeting with CT officials and advocates; at a US Health & Human Services meeting in DC which teleconferenced in the CDC and NIH on the walls of the room; and in 2010, at a Congressional Lyme disease forum in New Jersey hosted by Congressman Chris Smith. He presented at a testing seminar in NJ and at the LDA/Columbia Lyme & Tick-borne Diseases Conference and promoted chronic Lyme disease education at LDA's Literati with Lyme press conference in New York featuring authors Amy Tan, Meg Cabot, and Jordan Fisher-Smith. His personable presence has always been an asset and his presentations have been articulate and factual.

Above all, Dr. Harris is a family man. He is a devoted husband, and proud father and grandfather. He and his wife Aileen have a wonderful family, and they generously opened their home to me on some of my trips to California to do Lyme work. Perhaps Aileen thought that my presence in California might keep me from dragging Nick to meetings all over the US. ☺

LDA has always found him to be ethical and honest in all his dealings with people, and we have the greatest respect for him as a person and a scientist who has worked hard to make positive inroads to help all susceptible to tick-borne diseases and help all who already suffer from them. Speaking for the LDA, and I know for patients throughout the US and even the world, I say, thank you, Dr. Nick Harris, "he who must be named" and "he who must be honored" for your many contributions toward the health and well being of so many people. And thank you for being our friend and mentor. We love you, Nick.

On behalf of LDA, Congratulations on your retirement.

Pat Smith, President, Lyme Disease Association, Inc.