



Illinois Lyme Association (ILA) Overview

The Challenge

Ticks and tick-borne diseases are becoming more [widespread in Illinois](#) and globally. This trend presents challenges such as:

- Tick related illnesses are the fastest growing infectious diseases in the U.S. The most common is Lyme disease which is transmitted by a bite from an infected tick. Incidents are 1.5 times more common than breast cancer and 6 times more common than HIV.
- Many species of birds and mammals help move tick-borne diseases around, increasing the risks of exposure by humans in settings ranging from back yards to more naturalized areas.
- People are often challenged to find medical guidance and reliable information.
- Time is of the essence for diagnosing and treating tick-borne diseases. When detected in its early stage, Lyme disease is treatable with an appropriate course of antibiotic therapy. Untimely or otherwise inadequate treatment can lead to persistent symptoms with very high social and economic costs for victims and the people that support them.
- The ability of the medical community to diagnose and treat tick-borne diseases is uneven and frequently inadequate. Nationally, Lyme disease costs the health care system between \$712 million and \$1.3 billion per year.
- As tick-borne diseases become more prevalent a systems approach is needed that advances prevention, diagnosis and treatment, networking and coordination among public agencies, and support for people affected by the diseases.

Our Focus

The ILA is the only not-for-profit entity in the State of Illinois focused on making partnerships that lead and facilitate efforts in Illinois that help advance positive outcomes for people affected by tick-borne diseases. The ILA is educating and informing citizens regarding disease prevention as well as diagnosis and treatment. The ILA also catalyzes networking and coordination among public agencies, the health care system in general, and offers outreach and support for people affected by these diseases.

Our Collaborations

The ILA has formed partnerships with the University of Illinois including the National Center for Supercomputing Applications, the Prairie Research Institute, and the Illinois Natural History Survey. Collaborations are also underway with The Allan Lab, Illinois State University, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Department of Public Health, and the Illinois State Medical Society. The ILA is also working with healthcare professionals and several hospital networks and associations to provide education campaigns for medical providers.

Our Impacts

The State of Illinois is emerging as a lead Midwestern state for tick research and the ILA has greatly contributed to this trajectory. The ILA formed new collaborations among federal and state Legislators, the University of Illinois, Prairie Research Institute, Illinois Natural History Survey, Illinois State University, Illinois Department of Public Health, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and the Illinois State Medical Society.

The ILA is:

- Effectively working with healthcare professionals and several hospital networks to provide education campaigns for health care providers.
- Advancing *Tick Talk 101 – What You Need to Know*, a comprehensive presentation for the general public regarding tick-borne diseases, the pathogens they carry, symptoms and how to use proper protection.
- Helping families that are affected by tick-borne diseases by hosting support group meetings and connecting them with much needed resources and treatment possibilities.
- Working with natural resource managers to raise awareness of ticks. The ILA and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources have initiated a signage campaign for public lands. Several state parks have posted signs with tick prevention and warning information.
- Working with the Illinois Natural History Survey and the Illinois Department of Public Health to initiate the first ever active tick surveillance effort to better track the incidence and prevalence of ticks in Illinois.

In 2018, our Lauryn Russell Lyme Disease Prevention and Protection Law was passed to protect medical providers and establish a task force to assist the Illinois Department of Public Health on a public awareness and provider education program. The ILA is well represented on the task force as our Executive Director, Jennifer Russell is a member.

On August 12, 2019, Governor Pritzker signed into law a mandate for state regulated insurance and Medicaid plans to cover longer term antibiotic therapy for tick-borne illnesses. The ILA was instrumental in this monumental stride forward for Illinois.

The ILA convened its first Lyme disease Symposium. Federal and state legislators, researchers, nurses, and physicians all gathered to network and coordinate efforts to address tick-borne illness challenges.

Our Vision

The ILA is just beginning. We have many goals that can be achieved in the near future. As examples, we see opportunities for:

Collaborating with medical schools to provide more comprehensive information regarding tick-borne diseases.

Working in partnership with the Illinois State Medical Society to provide continuing education classes to established providers and clinicians.

Beginning a children's education campaign in schools.

Hosting annual conferences in Illinois to feature leading researchers, medical providers, and emerging information.

Continuing to facilitate communication and collaboration among regional, state, and federal partners.

Providing grants to medical students to help the next generation of providers who are willing to take on the complex treatments of tick-borne infections.

Our Need

With your help, we can continue to advance the trajectory of the State of Illinois as a lead Midwestern state for tick-borne disease prevention. The ILA is also strategically positioned to help inform and support health care providers to advance positive outcomes for people affected by tick-borne diseases. While these goals are in sight, the constraints are primarily financial and are typical for an emerging not-for-profit.

The ILA is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization, 83-2564041. Therefore, any donations are 100% tax deductible. Donations may be made through our website, www.ilymeassociation.org, PayPal at www.paypal.me/ilymeassoc or by check to 601 SE 19th Avenue, Aledo, IL 61231. We also can take stock, IRA or DAF fund donations. We greatly appreciate your support of our efforts to move Illinois forward.

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