



Deciphering Fact from Fiction in the Lyme World

When reading any documentation about Lyme disease, ask yourself the following questions:

Who is the author of this article? Can the information they are sharing be trusted, or could there be a bias?

Research published by Harvard University has more credibility than an article on an unknown news site or blog. An article written by a doctor should also be viewed with more credibility than a blog post or opinion piece written by a patient. Even still, individual doctors' or professionals' websites, books, and articles should still be looked at with a critical eye. When anyone states information as fact, one should determine where they have gotten their information from. Are they writing case reports based on their own experience, or what they have witnessed personally in their practice? Or are they basing their statements on actual research that was conducted double blind and peer reviewed, and then published?

Many doctors make statements along the lines of "98% of my patients have recovered from Lyme disease." It is important when hearing these numbers to consider how that provider came up with those statistics. Are they collecting patient follow-up data after their last appointments, or do they falsely assume that if patients don't return for a follow-up appointment that they are better? Do their patients simply report improvement, which they assume is due to x treatment, and not due to other changes made? What does "better" mean? Slight improvement? 100% symptom relief? Lab test results improved?

Is this a qualitative or quantitative study?

In the research world, quantitative (numerical) data is always easier to draw conclusions from and analyze than qualitative.

What kind of information is this? Blog post, opinion piece, research (case study, double-blind study, peer-reviewed research)

Who funded this research/study?

Many studies are funded by pharmaceutical companies, or brands trying to sell you products. It is important to consider whether any funding source has an interest in the published results, or if they would benefit in some way from the outcome of a research project.

Example: Sugar industry published studies showing that consumption of fat is linked to heart disease- now science is showing that SUGAR is the #1 cause of many health issues, not fat!

What is the sample population they used?

Example: In Lyme disease research, how are they determining who has Lyme disease? (those who have a positive Western Blot, those who have been diagnosed through IGenex or by an LLMD, or those who have self-diagnosed?)



Does the conclusion represent what was found in the study?

Example: “Studies have found that a glass of red wine is equal to an hour long work out at the gym.” What is this conclusion based on? Is this conclusion reliable based on the data that was retrieved?

Example 2: There was recently a study on Lyme disease and long term antibiotics that concluded that long term antibiotics were not an effective treatment for Lyme disease. However, if you read the study, patients did report improvement in symptoms after the time period in the study. They just weren’t 100% better or asymptomatic. Is this an accurate conclusion? Also, was 6 weeks enough time for this study?

Could other variables explain the conclusion(s) made in this article or study?

For example, some people may report that a certain antibiotic made them feel worse. Does this mean the antibiotic was ineffective, or could that person have been experiencing a herxheimer reaction ?

Some people might also believe that Lyme disease is sexually transmitted, or that it is congenitally passed. They may believe this especially if their partner was recently diagnosed, or if their parent also has Lyme disease. While sexual and congenital transmission of Lyme disease cannot be ruled out, it could also be possible that because families share the same home, they are more likely to be infected by ticks in their backyard, or ticks that have fallen off their dog, etc. Parents and children also often share the same genetic make-up, so they may have built a similar immune response to infections like Lyme disease.

What message should I extract from this report/study?

There are a lot of studies demonstrating that cats can spread Bartonella or toxoplasmosis, or that dogs carry ticks that can then migrate to our bodies. Does this mean we shouldn’t have dogs or cats? There are also many studies out there showing that cat owners are far less likely to be diagnosed with heart disease, and dog owners experience less feelings of loneliness.

Other tips:

*Google Scholar is a great tool to find scientific research published by academic sources

*Try to get information from MULTIPLE types of sources (blogs, articles, lit reviews, opinion pieces, research). Never rely on one source of information to get facts

*Remember that people once thought the world was round and that cigarettes were healthy- science evolves as more research comes out. It’s important to keep an open mind with anything related to health!

*Recognize your OWN bias- we are more likely to read, believe, and share information that supports our own theories, or that is convenient for us. Try to maintain a balance and remember it can be helpful to learn about the opposing views even if you don’t agree. Keep an open mind!

*Be weary of information overload. Reading all day long about a medication you are thinking about trying might only provoke anxiety or confusion. It is best to read a variety of sources and then take some quiet time for yourself to absorb the information and check in with your inner self to see what feels right- sometimes our own intuition can be our most valid tool for decision making!

*Check out this article- Intuition is the Highest Form of Intelligence-

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/brucekasanoff/2017/02/21/intuition-is-the-highest-form-of-intelligence/#13b96c903860>