



Town of Islesboro

TICK BULLETIN

June 2015

IHC to Participate in a Tick-borne Disease Diagnosis Study

Islesboro will be participating in a tick-borne disease clinical research study being conducted by the Lyme & Tick-borne Diseases Research Center at the Columbia University Medical Center in New York (the Center). The object of the study is to develop more accurate, reliable tests to diagnose Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases.

Last fall, IHC staff was introduced to the director of the Center, Brian Fallon, MD, an internationally known expert in the field of tick-borne diseases. When Dr. Fallon learned of the high prevalence of Lyme Disease on our island (138 confirmed cases in 7 years, 2008-2014), he asked if the IHC would be interested in becoming one of several study sites for the study. After careful consideration, the IHC staff concluded that although the project will add to the Health Center's responsibilities, the association with the Center at Columbia will be an important learning experience that will benefit patient care at IHC.

The study by Dr. Fallon's team will help not only in the development of more accurate diagnostic tests for Lyme and other tick-borne diseases, but also in the identification of biological "markers" to learn how quickly the human immune system returns to normal after Lyme infection. Most people who are treated early for Lyme disease recover. However, some have persistent symptoms. So this medical research will explore whether there are "markers" in the blood that predict who will recover fully versus who will have persistent disease symptoms. Ultimately, it is hoped that the discoveries made in this study will lead to better treatments of tick-borne disease.

Over the next several months, anyone who visits the IHC with new Lyme disease symptoms and meets the research criteria will be invited to participate in Dr. Fallon's study. Participation is completely voluntary, and the decision to participate will have NO impact on the treatment provided by our IHC providers. The research involves blood-draws and completing questionnaires. Those who agree to participate will receive more detailed information at the time of their visit. Monetary compensation (\$40.00 gift cards) will be given to participants each time they have blood drawn, and the IHC will also be compensated for its work.

In April, Dr. Fallon and his research assistant, Shreya Doshi, came from New York to spend a full day with IHC staff and members of the Tick-borne Disease Prevention Committee (T-bDPC). They explained the study in detail and reviewed step-by-step what the procedure for the blood draws will be.

It is an honor that the people of our island have been selected to work with the Center and that we will contribute valuable information in pursuit of better diagnosis and treatment of tick-borne disease. Watch for future updates via the *Tick Bulletin*, the *Islesboro Island News*, and the T-bDPC's section of the Town's website.

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