Symptoms Over Time Suggest Chronic Lyme

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BOSTON — Persistent musculoskeletal pain, headache, fatigue, and cognitive dysfunction that occur for no apparent reason over a prolonged period of time are key elements of a clinical diagnosis of chronic Lyme disease in children, results of a retrospective study have shown.

In an effort to identify the most telling clinical symptoms, the reliability of serologic studies, and the effects of drug therapy, Dr. Donta reviewed the clinical histories, serologies, and treatment results of 101 patients aged 2-19 years who were evaluated at Falmouth Hospital in Massachusetts for chronic Lyme disease. Tick bites occurred in 24% of the patients.

Musculoskeletal symptoms occurred in 90% of the patients, and fatigue, headache, and cognitive dysfunction were reported in 84%, 78%, and 74% of the patients, respectively. Other symptoms that occurred with some frequency included stomach pains or nausea (48%), paresthesias (46%), eye symptoms (40%), and fevers or sweats (39%).

The key is making sure the appropriate antibiotic is used and that therapy is adhered to and sustained for a long enough period, he said. "The earlier in the disease process treatment begins, the more successful it will be."