

LymeTAP offers financial assistance for Lyme disease testing

A nationwide program to help financially strapped patients pay for Lyme disease diagnostic tests will start accepting applications November 1.

The Lyme Testing Access Program (LymeTAP) will be administered through the Rotary Club of Ferndale Foundation, in coordination with the Humboldt Lyme Awareness Group (HLAG). It is made possible by a generous grant from IGeneX Reference Laboratory of Palo Alto. While all three organizations are based in California, people throughout the United States may apply.

“Many patients can’t afford the cost of basic testing,” said LymeTAP coordinator Sylviane Schwartz, of HLAG. “This poses a huge financial burden to patients, who must pay out-of-pocket to get properly diagnosed.”

LymeTAP permits testing at any lab of the patient’s choice provided it is certified by Medicare and CLIA (a government designation that sets standards for laboratory testing). Applicants for assistance must provide evidence of financial need. Their treating physician must also sign the application.

Initial funding for LymeTAP comes from a \$100,000 grant from IGeneX Labs. The program gives priority to children, but adults may also apply.

Lyme disease, a bacterial infection spread by ticks, is the fastest growing vector-borne disease in the United States. It has been reported in all 50 states and many foreign countries. Schwartz said it can be a complex illness to diagnose clinically because it can mimic other conditions such as fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, and multiple sclerosis.

“Delays in testing often lead to delays in treatment, which can make the disease harder to treat. LymeTAP will address one cause of testing delay, inability to pay,” Schwartz said. “We hope the program will allow more people to be tested and treated early.”

IGeneX, based in Palo Alto, is a reference lab certified by Medicare and CLIA that specializes in clinical and research testing for Lyme disease and other tickborne infections.

Humboldt Lyme Awareness Group is an educational organization promoting Lyme and tickborne disease awareness programs in northern California. HLAG volunteers will coordinate the LymeTAP program in conjunction with the Rotary Club of Ferndale Foundation.

The Rotary Club of Ferndale Foundation is a 501 c 3 charitable organization set up to support a variety of community needs. Rotary's motto is "service above self." According to a spokesman, "The LymeTAP program is a perfect example of this motto in action."

To find out more about LymeTAP and to download an application form, visit www.lymetap.org.