

Blastocystis Research Foundation

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The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Eugene Office
405 East 8th Ave. #2030
Eugene, OR 97401

Dear Representative DeFazio,

I'm following up on communications from your constituents concerning Blastocystis infection, and also providing you with the enclosed study just published by Oregon State University and an infectious disease research group with the Department of Defense.

The study may be of interest because it concerns a health issue in the Willamette Valley, mainly Blastocystis infection. This is a protozoal disease that produces symptoms of chronic gastrointestinal illness, fatigue [1], skin rashes [2] and joint pain [3]. In the last several years, researchers have found that the diagnostics and treatments in use in the United States are not reliable [4,5]. As such, many patients are left with chronic infection, no diagnosis, and even those diagnosed can not be treated.

This disease emerged in the Middle East shortly before the Persian Gulf War [1], and one article noted that 50% of veterans returned with this [6]. Studies from the Middle East in the last few years have provided valuable information showing that the types of Blastocystis that exist there are highly virulent [7], resistant to antibiotic treatment [8], and difficult to detect [9]. These findings suggest that Persian Gulf War veterans may benefit from more reliable diagnostics to screen for this infection, and treatments that would work.

This is a real disease – my family had no health problems before moving to Corvallis in 2000. By 2003, three members of my family had chronic illness.

This is also a solvable problem. We've already made substantial progress without any support from the NIH or CDC. We will be asking your constituents to contact you to seek your support on a petition to fund Blastocystis research in the United States. The NIH has not funded clinical research in the US in this area in over 14 years [10], and the result is that we have no clinical research expertise in the United States for what is now the most prevalent gastrointestinal infection in Oregon [11].

We hope you will be able to support our petition to establish a research effort in the United States into this disease.

Best Regards,

Ken Boorom
Director, Blastocystis Research Foundation