

## Abstract

Within the past year, the state of Vermont became one of the country's top target areas for Lyme disease in its population. Consequently, public health efforts are focusing on preventative measures within the context of Vermont's culture of outdoor activities and life within the state's vast rural region. Prevention mechanisms and techniques vary from state to state, depending on knowledge and awareness of Lyme, and overall incidence rate. Therefore, prevention and precaution measures require data that identifies behavior in those that are most at risk of the disease. This study undertakes an inquiry that is based on semi-structured interviews with ten individuals that are currently living with chronic Lyme disease or have had Lyme disease in Vermont. The central purpose of this study is to better understand why Lyme disease has increased in Vermont in recent years, and how specific behavior through outdoor activities put these individuals at risk leading to illness. An analysis of the interviews showed that the participants that contracted Lyme disease did not have previous knowledge or prevention practices. Not only were participants unaware of the details of Lyme disease, physicians in Vermont were not properly diagnosing patients. Because of the similarity to other illnesses, a tick bite can lead to long-term chronic illness. In conclusion, this study calls for a full review of prevention measures and a series of public health initiatives that are more directly aligned with educating Vermont residents concerning the risk of Lyme. A plan of recommendations for Vermont Public Health Officials will help identify risk factors and provide specific prevention measures for this specific population.