THE CORNFLOWER

The cornflower is the ALS Canada and ALS Manitoba emblem because despite its fragile appearance, it is a hardy wildflower found throughout Canada. Like the cornflower, people living with ALS show remarkable strength in coping with a devastating disease. Like the cornflower, awareness of ALS—and funding for care and a cure—is growing across Canada.

For further information about available resources, services and support contact

ALS SOCIETY OF MANITOBA

ALS SLA

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The ALS Society of Manitoba does **NOT** exchange, trade or sell lists to other organizations

What is ALS?

ALS SLA

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS
SCLEROSE LATERALE AMYOTROPHIQUE

ALS. Three letters that change people's lives. . . . FOREVER

ALS FACT SHEET

- Every day two or three Canadians die of ALS
- According to Statistics Canada, from 1994 to 1996, deaths due to ALS were 94% higher than deaths from Cystic Fibrosis, 70% greater than Multiple Sclerosis and only 15% less than AIDS
- In excess of 3,000 Canadians currently live with ALS, more than 270 of which live in Manitoba
- June is ALS Awareness Month
- ALS may also be called:
  - Lou Gehrig's Disease
  - Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis
  - Motor Neuron Disease (MND)
- 90% of people with ALS die within three to five years of diagnosis. Some will die within a few short months and some will live longer than five years
- ALS can and does strike anyone. It can be diagnosed at any time, regardless of age, sex or ethnic origin, however, usual onset is in middle age
- Approximately 10% of diagnosed cases are a familial ALS
- It is estimated that the total cost for an individual living with ALS is between $270,000 and $400,000, with minimal assistance through the government
- ALS affects the whole family as 90% of care is shouldered by family caregivers and friends

The cause is unknown.

There is no cure . . . .

YET!!

"ALS is clearly the most common cause of neurological death on an annual basis."

-Dr. Michael Strong, MD, FRCPC
An ALS Research Scientist at Robarts Research Institute

WHAT IS ALS?

ALS, sometimes called Lou Gehrig's disease or Motor Neuron Disease, is a rapidly progressive fatal neuromuscular disease. It is characterized by degeneration of a select group of nerve cells and pathways in the brain and spinal cord, which leads to progressive paralysis of the voluntary muscles.

WHO IS DIAGNOSED WITH ALS?

ALS can strike anyone. ALS is not contagious, does not discriminate and can strike at any age. The usual age of onset is between 55 and 65, but people under 20 have been diagnosed. ALS is usually fatal within 3 to 5 years of diagnosis. In the majority of cases the cause is unknown. In about 5 to 10% of cases there is a hereditary pattern.

WHAT ARE THE EARLY SYMPTOMS?

ALS usually becomes apparent either in the legs, the arms, the throat or the upper chest area. Some people begin to trip and fall, some lose the use of their hands and arms, some find it hard to swallow and some slur their speech.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF ALS?

Because ALS frequently takes its toll before being positively diagnosed, many patients are debilitated before learning they have ALS. The disease does not usually affect the senses—taste, touch, sight, smell and hearing or the mind.

ALS wreaks a devastating effect on patients as well as their families. As they cope with the prospect of advancing disability and death, it consumes their financial and emotional reserves. It is a costly disease in its later stages, demanding both extensive nursing care and expensive equipment.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT ALS?

Although recent scientific research has resulted in significant new knowledge, much more research is needed to find a cure. Research is being conducted in areas relating to genetic predispositions, viral or infectious agents, environmental toxins, and immunological changes.

Canada is quickly becoming the leading Country for research in ALS.

IS THERE HOPE FOR PEOPLE WITH ALS?

At the present time, there is presently only one treatment. Research is investigating ways to reverse the disease, and there may eventually be a cure for ALS.

Many people with ALS say that they live life more fully now with much joy—even knowing what is to come. In the meantime, good planning together with medical and social management, eases the burden on the person with ALS and family members.

WHAT IS THE ALS SOCIETY OF MANITOBA?

The ALS Society of Manitoba is a member of the Federation Council of ALS Societies across Canada with a commitment to provide the best possible care and support for Manitobans living with ALS, their families and care givers. As well, we build public awareness of ALS and its impact on society. We also support research into the cause of and the cure for ALS.

VISION

Improved quality of life for all people affected by ALS/MND.

MISSION

Helping **O**ur **P**eople **E**veryway we can by:

-Investing in Research
- Providing Client Services