

Ottawa Journal by David Tilson MP ? ALS Month is coming soon

For anyone whose been told they have been diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, it is beyond terrifying news to hear.

This debilitating neurodegenerative disease, which prevents those affected by it from having the ability to control their own bodies, is incurable and approximately 80 per cent will die within two to five years of being diagnosed. However, we can all do our part to raise awareness and support the work toward finding effective treatments for this most terrible disease.

According to the ALS Society of Canada's website, more than 200,000 people around the world are living with ALS and two to three people die of the disease in Canada each day. The lifetime risk of developing ALS is one in 1,000.

There isn't a specific cause of the disease; however, it is seen as having multiple interacting causes, which are likely based on changes in the genes of those affected by it and possibly environmental factors.

Research has identified a number of genes which contribute in the development of ALS. Ongoing research is helping to learn more about the disease and to determine the multiple factors which may trigger the disease's development in those diagnosed with it.

I have a very personal connection to ALS. My father was diagnosed with this disease, and ultimately, succumbed to it.

The painful experience I had watching my father suffer from ALS for four years had an immense impact on me. I wanted to take action to support all Canadians living with ALS and this is why I re-introduced my Private Member's Bill C-205 (An Act to designate the month of June as ALS Month), also known as ALS Month Act, in the House of Commons Dec. 10, 2015. If this Bill were to pass, it would officially designate June as National ALS Month. My intention is that such legislation would help to increase awareness and the much-needed support for ongoing research efforts.

For now, we can each do our part to support ALS research and Canadians living with ALS by becoming involved with organizations such as the ALS Society of Canada. This organization performs invaluable work of researching ALS, as well as providing essential services and support to families impacted by the disease. One way we can each lend our support is to participate in WALK for ALS. We have a WALK coming up here in Dufferin-Caledon. I will be participating in it June 4 in Orangeville at the Island Lake Conservation Area. The Walk will begin at 10 a.m. with registration taking place at 8:30 a.m. For more information, please contact Lee Pettit at orangevillewalk@hotmail.com

Information on registering may be found at <http://walkforals.ca/find-a-walk/ontario/>

Together we can make a difference for those living with ALS. For more information on the ALS Society of Canada, please visit www.als.ca/

