

Ottawa Journal by David Tilson MP ? June is ALS Month throughout Canada

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, is a devastating neurodegenerative disease that prevents sufferers from having the ability to control the movement of their own bodies.

Sadly, there is no treatment for ALS, making it a terminal disease for those diagnosed with it. However, by increasing our awareness, we can all work together to make it a treatable disease, which is why ALS Month is so very important.

According to the ALS Society of Canada, two or three Canadians die from ALS every day. The disease works by killing nerve cells and as a result, degeneration of the upper and lower motor neurons in the brain and spinal cord occurs. This causes those suffering from the disease to be trapped in a body in which the voluntary muscles no longer work. Thus, they can no longer initiate their own movements, although their sense and intellect remain very much intact. Many finally succumb to this terminal disease because of their inability to breathe and swallow. On average, a patient diagnosed with ALS will live between two to five years; however, some may live shorter or longer.

The fight against ALS is something very important to me, as my father was diagnosed with this disease and succumbed to it. My personal experience with ALS led me to introduce a Private Member's Bill (C-366) to have June officially designated as National ALS Month. Due to the many unknowns surrounding ALS and the thousands of Canadians suffering from the disease, my hope is that the Bill will help increase awareness and support for ongoing research efforts.

We can all do our part to help increase ALS awareness by taking part in a Walk for ALS, which is the largest fundraiser with 90 walks taking place across Canada and 32 of them occurring in Ontario. Here in Dufferin-Caledon, I will be participating in the Orangeville Walk for ALS, taking place June 6 at the Island Lake Conservation Area in Orangeville which begins at 10 a.m. For more information on the Orangeville Walk, please contact Lee Pettit by telephone at 519-940-8357 or by e-mail at orangevillewalk@hotmail.com

The Walks for ALS are not only crucial for fundraising, but also to provide those suffering from the disease and their families with important emotional support. It's an excellent way to let them know they aren't alone in their fight.

Our active participation in ALS Month will help provide the much-needed support and resources for those living with ALS and to raise important funds for research. For more information on ALS, please visit the ALS Society of Canada's website at www.als.ca
Together, we can make a difference

