

All about ALS

June is Cataract Awareness Month, Men's Health Month, and more. These and other National Health Observances are dedicated to raising awareness about important health topics. Information on these health topics is readily available through foundation or association websites and of course through various library resources. The awareness months promote spreading that available information for various reasons. Awareness of health topics could cause people to adopt a healthier lifestyle, be more empathetic towards those suffering from illness, receive a diagnosis and treatment, and fund research for improved treatment and cures.

One of the National Health Observances that occurred during the month of May was Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) Awareness Month. ALS is often referred to as Lou Gehrig's Disease because the American baseball player, Henry Louis "Lou" Gehrig, suffered from this paralyzing disease. "Luckiest Man: The Life and Death of Lou Gehrig" by Jonathan Eig details Gehrig's career in baseball from the beginning of his rise to fame, to his success on the field, and the decline caused by ALS.

"Tuesdays with Morrie" by Mitch Albom also shares an experience of physical decline caused by ALS. Morrie Schwartz was once a professor of Albom's. When Morrie was diagnosed with ALS, Albom visited him on numerous occasions and recorded the imparted life lessons, which became the book "Tuesdays with Morrie." Another memoir of an ALS sufferer that can soon be found at Columbus Public Library was donated by the organization ALS in the Heartland. "Until I Say Goodbye: My Year of Living with Joy" was written by Susan Spencer-Wendel, with the help of Bret Witter. Wendel was a wife and mother who died from ALS. She chronicles various adventures in her life and the lives of her children during her physical decline and describes how she made a conscious effort to stay positive throughout the deterioration of her muscles.

"Indestructible" by Ben Byer is a memoir DVD. This documentary follows Byer for three years across six countries as this single father battles the neurodegenerative ALS.

If you are less interested in personal experiences of ALS and more interested in learning about symptoms, progression, or available resources, then head to the health section of the Columbus Public Library. "Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis" from the American Academy of Neurology includes a variety of options for managing the symptoms of ALS, and information about resources available such as how the ALS Association can help patients and their families.

Another book donated by ALS in the Heartland that will soon be available for checkout is "Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis: A Guide for Patients and Families" edited by Hiroshi Mitsumoto, MD. This book covers a wide range of applicable topics for ALS patients and their families written by a variety of experts. The book explains symptoms, discusses the diagnosis process, and describes approaches to managing ALS. It includes ways to live with ALS such as wheelchair selection, managing swallowing difficulties, and using meditation techniques. The text also includes information about hospice care, how to handle the mourning process, and organizations that you can turn to for help.

Stop by the Columbus Public Library to check out these items about ALS, and browse or search for information on other health related topics.