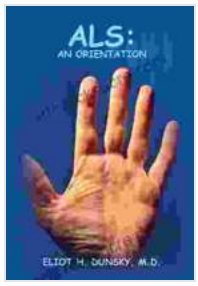
Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS): An Overview



ALS: An Orientation by Afsaneh Moradian

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Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS),also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, is a progressive neurological disorder that damages the nerve cells responsible for controlling voluntary movement. This leads to muscle weakness and atrophy, eventually affecting the ability to walk, talk, eat, and breathe.

Symptoms

ALS affects people in different ways, but some common symptoms include:

- Muscle weakness and atrophy in the limbs, trunk, and face
- Difficulty walking, climbing stairs, and performing other everyday activities
- Difficulty speaking and swallowing

- Muscle cramps and spasms
- Fatigue
- Respiratory problems
- Cognitive impairment and emotional changes

Causes

The exact cause of ALS is unknown, but it is thought to be caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Some of the risk factors for ALS include:

- Family history of ALS
- Military service
- Exposure to certain chemicals and toxins
- Head injury

Diagnosis

Diagnosing ALS can be challenging, as there is no single test that can definitively diagnose the disease. Doctors will typically conduct a physical examination and ask about the patient's symptoms. They may also order blood tests, imaging tests, and nerve conduction studies to rule out other conditions.

Treatment Options

There is no cure for ALS, but there are treatments available to help manage the symptoms and improve the quality of life. Some of the treatment options include:

- Medications to slow the progression of the disease
- Physical and occupational therapy to help maintain strength and mobility
- Speech therapy to help with speech and swallowing problems
- Respiratory support to help with breathing difficulties
- Nutritional support to ensure the patient is getting adequate nutrition

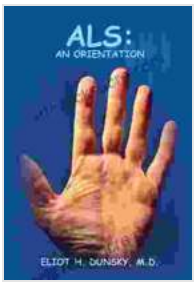
Prognosis

The prognosis for ALS varies from person to person. The average life expectancy after diagnosis is 3-5 years, but some people may live for many years with the disease. The rate of progression of the disease also varies, with some people experiencing a rapid decline in function while others experience a more gradual decline.

ALS is a devastating disease that has a profound impact on the lives of those affected by it. However, there is hope. There are treatments available to help manage the symptoms of ALS and improve the quality of life. There is also research ongoing to find a cure for the disease.

Resources

- The ALS Association
- Muscular Dystrophy Association
- Mayo Clinic



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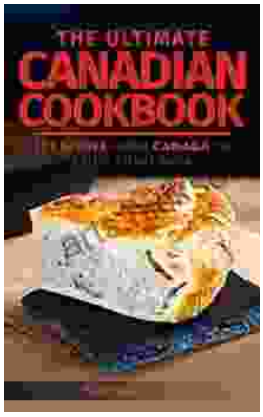

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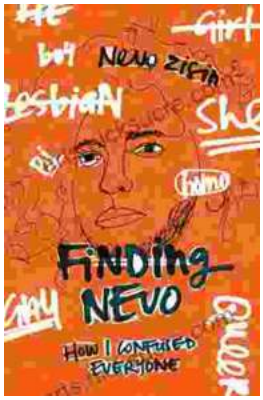

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