

# LOU GEHRIG'S DISEASE



**Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) is a cruel disease that often strikes people in the prime of their lives.**

**Also known as Lou Gehrig's disease,** it destroys nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord responsible for movement. As these cells cease to function, the muscles weaken and waste away, resulting in total paralysis. There is no known cause or cure for the disease. But specialized care can make a significant difference in a patient's quality of life.

UCI Medical Center is home to a nationally recognized ALS clinic that offers comprehensive, multidisciplinary services and compassionate care to people with this devastating disease. It is one of only 37 ALS clinics in the country designated by the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA). The clinic

[www.ucihealth.com](http://www.ucihealth.com)

UCI's ALS and Neuromuscular Center is one of only 37 clinics nationwide designated by the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

will move into expanded quarters later this year to become the new UCIrvine ALS and Neuromuscular Center, enabling physicians and researchers to work side by side to

improve diagnosis and treatment. The Center, to be located at the UCI Manchester Pavilion one block away from the medical center in Orange, also will provide care for patients with muscular dystrophy, myasthenia gravis and related conditions.

**Compassionate care.** "There's currently no definitive test to identify ALS," says **Dr. Tahseen Mozaffar**, a neurologist and co-director of the Center. "The diagnosis is based on the patient's symptoms and tests that rule out other diseases."

Treatments are designed to control symptoms and maintain a person's quality of life. "Riluzole is currently the only ALS medication approved by the Federal Drug Administration," says Mozaffar. "It doesn't reverse the damage done by the disease, but delays the time before patients must use ventilators." Exercise programs, special equipment and physical,

occupational and speech therapy also help ALS patients remain functional for as long as possible. For patients' convenience, physical therapists are located adjacent to the site of the future center.

But research is the real answer. This became apparent to 48-year-old Augie Nieto, who learned he had the disease in March 2005. A lifelong exercise enthusiast, Nieto is credited with starting the indoor cardiovascular fitness revolution in the late 1970s. While still in college, the Corona del Mar resident bought the rights to the world's first stationary bike. Soon after, he began selling the revolutionary exercise equipment to gyms and later established Lifecycle Inc. The company eventually became Life Fitness, the world's largest manufacturer of exercise equipment. Now a patient at UCI's ALS center, Nieto is approaching ALS with the same entrepreneurial spirit that helped him launch a worldwide fitness movement. And he's determined to help researchers discover the cause of and cure for ALS.

**Augie's Quest.** In the last year, Nieto raised more than \$4.2 million for ALS research through Augie's Quest, a program in partnership with MDA. His goal is to reach \$12 million. Funds are distributed through the MDA to support ALS centers and help promising ALS researchers. UCI's new ALS and Neuromuscular Center is being established with a grant raised through Augie's Quest/MDA Cure ALS.

"The new Center will serve to consolidate our clinical, diagnostic and clinical research functions and will allow us to develop cutting-edge translational research, building on the complementary strength of the many stellar basic science investigators on the UCI campus," says Mozaffar, who is a member of the MDA advisory committee on ALS research. "The MDA recognizes UCI doctors' expertise in dealing with the disorder and the university's record in ALS research."

For more information, visit [www.augiesquest.org](http://www.augiesquest.org) and [www.als-mda.org](http://www.als-mda.org). To learn more about UCI's ALS Center, call toll free 1-888-9ALS-UCI.