INAHTA Briefs

Title	**Systematic Reviews for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis**
Agency	**VATAP, VA Technology Assessment Program**
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Reference	VA Technology Assessment Program Report, Brief Overview, June 2009.
	www4.va.gov/VATAP/docs/ALS2009tagm.pdf

Aim

To summarize the literature on amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) in support of the National Task Group's development of an integrated system of care for veterans with ALS.

Conclusions and results

The Technology Assessment Program (TAP) found no systematic reviews addressing the diagnosis of ALS. Out of 150 articles, TAP included 18 independent systematic reviews of treatment interventions, 3 related publications, and 8 Cochrane protocols. Published literature on ALS is lacking in both quantity and quality. Much of the focus in ALS research remains on the pathology of ALS and possibly distinct forms of the disease. No INAHTA members have organized systems of care specific to ALS, and VA (Veterans Affairs) cannot make specific conclusions based on the literature.

Recommendations

Due to the lack of treatment options and the lack of research on the efficacy of those treatments, VA cannot make specific recommendations for patients with ALS. However, VA did develop a research agenda for further studies of ALS.

Methods

TAP identified available systematic reviews on ALS by searching MEDLINE and the Cochrane Library using the terms "amyotrophic lateral sclerosis" and "Lou Gherig's disease." TAP also sought information on the organization of ALS care from other INAHTA members.

Further research/reviews required

Further studies of diagnostic tools are needed on: ALS and other motor neuron diseases; the benefits of clinics and their impact on patient quality of life; treatments for ALS and their efficacy; and the economic impacts of treatment.

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