

## **REHABILITATION MEDICINE IN ALS**

A. Pražnikar

Department of Neurology, University Medical Centre Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder that poses a myriad of clinical, personal and social problems. ALS is clinically manifested predominantly by upper motor neuron signs and symptoms in limb and trunk musculature like spasticity, central paresis, loss of dexterity, disinhibition of pathological reflexes; lower motor neuron signs and symptoms like atrophy, weakness, loss of tendon reflexes, lowered muscle tone, fasciculation; and bulbar signs and symptoms like dysarthria, dysphagia, sialorrhoe, emotional lability... Fatigue, dementia, pain, sleep disorders, depression or cachexia could contribute to severity of clinical picture in some patients with ALS. At the moment there is no causal treatment that would significantly change the prognosis of the patients with ALS. The disease course relentlessly progresses to respiratory compromise. Rehabilitation medicine (also in neurology) bases its interventions on disordered function ("lack of activity") in order to lessen the disability of the individual patient ("lack of participation"). According to International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF, WHO) functioning

and disability are viewed as a complex interaction between the health condition of the individual and the contextual factors of the environment as well as personal factors – "the person in his or her world". Rehabilitation principle treats these dimensions of health as interactive and dynamic in each patient with ALS. By doing so, rehabilitation team that consists of rehabilitation specialist or neurologist, physical and occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, dietitians, psychologists, social workers, rehabilitation nurses and case managers evaluates and treats loss of function due to motor, psychological and/or social consequences of ALS. The need for anticipation and for a quick response of the health system makes rehabilitation of patients with ALS specific. The main goals are to prolong independence, prevent complications and improve quality of life. Therefore, rehabilitation medicine offers active approach in addressing the disease, improves the quality of life and prolongs the survival in patients with ALS as part of complex multidisciplinary team management as a gold standard of today's management of patients with ALS.