

10 Genes Suspected in Lou Gehrig's Disease Progression

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Blood samples from more than 220 Methodist Hospital patients with Lou Gehrig's disease were used in research that revealed significant changes in or around 10 specific genes in sporadic ALS, the most common form of the condition. The results were published recently in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

"This discovery has helped identify new biological pathways for the progression of ALS in individuals with this debilitating disease," said Stanley Appel, M.D., chair of the department of neurology at The Methodist Hospital and co-founder of the Methodist Neurological Institute. "ALS is most likely caused by a combination of environmental and genetic components. This type of study provides us with a better understanding of the genetic contribution."

Sporadic (non-inherited) ALS affects 90 percent of the ALS population, and this statistic is true of the patients at the Methodist Neurological Institute's MDA/ALS Clinic, the first and one of the largest multi-disciplinary ALS clinics in the nation. "Our incredible, courageous patients were able to personally contribute to our quest to find a cure for ALS by providing their own blood toward our joint mission," said Appel, co-author of the paper. "I hope that our work honors them with real results that can improve their lives and the lives of those who might some day be cured of ALS."

ALS or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis is sometimes called Lou Gehrig's Disease to commemorate the record-setting New York Yankee first baseman who died from the disease in 1941. ALS is a progressive and fatal disease caused by the degeneration of motor neurons, the nerve cells in the central nervous system that control voluntary muscle movement.