

IN THIS ISSUE:

**ALS Family Caregiver
Virtual Bootcamp**
p. 3

**Welcome Interview:
Dr. Tracy Bazan**
p. 4

**Providence ALS Center is
part of Providence Brain
and Spine Institute.**

Providence ALS Center is the leading comprehensive care center in Oregon, certified by the ALS Association as a Center of Excellence offering a multidisciplinary approach to ensure ease and excellence. Our program emphasizes treatment, coordinated care, education and early intervention to manage symptoms.



ALS and COVID Vaccines

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Our entire world was turned upside down nearly a year ago as the first cases of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) arrived in the USA. And for all patients with ALS, as well as their caregivers, it was a double whammy. First was the fear of a deadly respiratory illness with increased risk due to ALS, but it also added an enormous emotional stress due to the requirement for social and physical isolation for personal protection and to “flatten the curve”.

Fast forward one year, and it is frankly a miracle that the biomedical research community quickly identified the pathogen now called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), determined its DNA code and produced 2 vaccines in record time that have been found to be 95% effective at protecting against the disease COVID-19.

With nearly 40 years as a pulmonary and critical care physician, who now primarily cares for patients with ALS, I am well aware of the spectrum of

...Continued on page 2

ALS and COVID Vaccines

...Continued from page 1

problems faced by COVID-19 patients and how that could play havoc with anyone with ALS. Although many COVID-19 patients have few symptoms or minor symptoms, a significant minority have severe disease with pneumonia and/or respiratory failure. Some need invasive mechanical ventilation and 1-2% die. We are approaching 500,000 deaths in the USA — a number that is overwhelming to consider and exceeds the numbers of Americans who have died in the major wars of the past century. Now that we have two vaccines, with more to come, there is significant optimism that we might be able to eventually return to a normal life. But we are not there yet, and certainly there may be significant bumps in the road.

There are still many questions to answer about the vaccines but there is no doubt that the potential benefit for nearly everyone is drastically greater than any potential theoretical concerns. I have personally reviewed extensive literature about the vaccines and discussed their use in ALS with local and national experts, including neurologists and infectious disease specialists. Every expert believes it is imperative that all ALS patients consider getting the vaccine as soon as possible. The early experience in over 60,000

patients in trials of the first two vaccines suggests there are no serious long-lasting complications. In addition, there is nothing to suggest that the vaccine can have any significant effect on the course of ALS itself. Although these are new vaccines, the mechanism of action has been studied for more than 10 years in other conditions and appears to have an excellent safety record.

Of course, getting the vaccine is presently a challenge, but in time there should be many more avenues to easily obtain the vaccine. For your future good health and to help our world return to normality, please get the vaccine as soon as feasible. Of course, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact your primary care physician or, if you have ALS, please contact your ALS clinic team.

Additional information from the ALS Association of Oregon & Southwest Washington:

We strongly advise all people living with ALS to consult with their physician to discuss taking the vaccine as soon as supplies in their states

allow. The ALS Association continues to consult with ALS medical specialists nationwide and we remain encouraged by the safety and efficacy data. You can listen to our December 10, 2020 podcast interview with Cliff Gooch, M.D., Chair of the University of South Florida's Department of Neurology and a member of The ALS Association Board of Trustees. Dr. Gooch details the process of review and vetting of vaccines and discusses the vaccine in the context of an ALS diagnosis.

The ALS Association and our physician partners at affiliated ALS Clinics and Centers are advocating for people with ALS and their family caregivers to get expedited access to the coronavirus vaccine. We have shared this need with authorities in Oregon and Washington state capitols. States are ultimately decision makers for the timeline and distribution of the vaccine. Learn more about the phases at the Oregon Health Authority Website and Washington State Department of Health Website. We will continue to share more information about access as we learn more. ■

To learn more about ALS and COVID-19, you can also visit The ALS Association's COVID-19 Vaccine Information hub: www.als.org/navigating-als/living-with-als/covid-vaccines

ALS FAMILY CAREGIVER *Virtual* BOOTCAMP

*Coming
May
2021*

This week-long series of educational programs from ALS experts will include morning sessions with videos and printable resources, as well as afternoon Q&As on common ALS caregiving topics. Full details coming soon. Questions? Connect with Lauren Brown at Providence ALS Center or Susan Pennock at ALS Association.

TOPICS

Respiratory: how to do breath stacking & cough assist

Nursing & Nutrition: using feeding tubes & condom catheters

PT: step-by-step transfer assists & Hoyer use

OT: safe dressing tips & mobile arm supports

Speech: setting up partner assisted scanning & Eye Gaze

CO-PRESENTED BY:



Welcome Interview with Dr. Tracy Bazan



Dr. Tracy Bazan

Where did you complete your training?

I attended medical school at New York Medical College in Valhalla, NY. It's a small town about 25 miles north of the city. I completed my residency and neuromuscular fellowship at OHSU.

What brought you to Portland?

Apart from a few moves, I mostly grew up in Portland and Beaverton.

It wasn't until I left for medical school that I realized how much I liked living here. The vegetation makes Portland such a beautiful city. As it has grown over the years, I've enjoyed exploring several of the new restaurants and breweries or getting away by taking a trip to the coast or the mountains.

What has it been like to join the Providence ALS Center team?

It's been a busy transition, not to mention Dr. Goslin is a tough act to follow, but the ALS team has been nothing but welcoming and supportive. Lauren even welcomed me with a homemade sign in my office on my official first day. I feel fortunate to have joined a team that provides excellent medical care and does so in such a caring way.

What is your care philosophy?

I've always been driven to provide compassionate care. We certainly focus on medical knowledge, which is a critical part of our profession,

but that knowledge needs to be applied with compassion for our patients. People want to know that you are listening to them. This is especially true when caring for people with ALS. There are many difficult conversations and decisions that occur throughout the course of this disease. I always want people to feel informed and supported in the interventions they choose or don't choose to pursue.

What life experience has taught or changed you the most?

Growing up with parents that immigrated to this country instilled several values in me at a young age. They came from Peru when I was one and a half years old. They taught me the importance of perseverance as I watched them work hard throughout my childhood to build the life they have today. ■

MISSION

As expressions of God's healing love, witnessed through the ministry of Jesus, we are steadfast in serving all, especially those who are poor and vulnerable.

OUR VALUES

Compassion, Dignity, Justice, Excellence, Integrity

PROVIDENCE ALS CENTER

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