

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0702/10  
by Aldo Patriciello (PPE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis: a multifactorial disease

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, generally known as ALS, is a lethal neurodegenerative disease that gradually affects the motor neurons (nerve cells) which control muscle movement.

The causes of the disease are as yet unknown and the substantial amount of research currently under way has found that the causes of ALS are multifactorial, such as genetic predisposition, an excess of antibodies, a lack of growth factors (substances which facilitate nerve interconnections) and toxic environmental factors.

Although it is difficult to give a precise figure for the cases of ALS, according to the statistics, Italy has an average of three new cases a day, and it is estimated that the annual incidence is of approximately 2.5 per 100 000 inhabitants.

The football world has seen a growth rate in the disease that is seven or eight times higher than the average, as confirmed by a number of investigations led by the Turin Prosecutor's Office, which ascertained that among footballers there have been as many as 43 cases of ALS out of 30 000 players taken into consideration. This is equivalent to an incidence of 143/100 000, a statistic which is nearly 24 times higher than that relating to the general population.

In the light of the above,

1. does the Commission not think it should monitor, by means of a scientific investigation, the development of the disease among footballers, who are more greatly exposed to it?
2. Does the Commission intend to take any action to raise awareness among the Member States?