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### Introduction

I AM ALS (IAA) is a U. S. community-led nonprofit revolutionizing ALS advocacy. Community members self-organize into teams around affinity groups or advocacy interests. Each team seeks to improve the quality of life of those living with and impacted by ALS and find cures and treatments for ALS. The Many Shades of ALS Community Team (MSOA) is one of these groups and meets weekly to help address issues specific to people of color living with or impacted by ALS.

### Methods

The MSOA team decided to address mental health since it has repeatedly come up in community needs assessments. They created the Let's Talk About It panel series as a platform from which community members could discuss their mental health as it pertains to ALS-related topics. Panel discussions are formulated and led by people of color living with and impacted by ALS. The creation of each installment is a collaborative and team-driven process. Panel topics are suggested by individual team members and agreed upon by the group. After a topic is chosen, the team workshops thought-provoking questions that expand upon the topic. Staffed with people of color living with or impacted by ALS, panels may also include a mental health professional and/or a social worker from the I AM ALS Community Support Team. Each installment also aims to engage the audience by encouraging questions and comments.

### Results

Each installment of Let's Talk About It focuses on a different ALS topic discussed through a mental health lens. Previous topics include coping with the progressive loss of function and independence, navigating holidays, and discrimination. In 2022, I AM ALS hosted two Let's Talk About It sessions with 28 total attendees. In 2023, MSOA hosted three with 49 attendees. The team plans to host four panels in 2024.

### Discussion

According to Prell et al., strong emotional health is linked to slower ALS progression. Through their Let's Talk About It series, MSOA aims to foster this crucial healthy emotional well-being while also connecting people to the resources they need. The program provides audiences with a chance to feel seen, understood, and less alone while providing panelists with the therapeutic opportunity to share their story and experiences. The MSOA team is already planning for their 2024 Let's Talk About It programming and looks forward to continuing to provide a community space honoring mental health. This program is especially critical given that a recent I AM ALS survey showed mental health support as the second highest priority for the ALS community.

## Many Shades of ALS



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