

## About the Ice Bucket Challenge

I hope you check out and enjoy the video of me and Michael Chelseth taking part in the Ice Bucket Challenge (filmed by the wonderful Alyssa Lauzon)! Now, I know that this viral phenomenon has stirred up a bit of controversy, so I wanted to take up a bit of space to speak about that.

Here's what's *not* controversial: ALS is a terrible disease, we ought to be researching a cure, and it's good to raise funds to help make that happen. But, there's no shortage of opinions about the Ice Bucket Challenge and the ALS Association. Isn't that a waste of water? Doesn't the ALS Association support embryonic stem cell research?

I've seen and heard it all. There's a graph out there comparing common illnesses and their prevalence to how much funds have been raised to research that illness; heart disease is far and away the most common, but receives some of the lowest funding, while ALS is extremely rare but (at least this year) has taken in massive donations toward its research.

Look – a disease, and an association that combats it, that heretofore didn't get much attention is now benefiting from a spike in public support. If your gripe is, "But we should be funding heart disease research!" Well: why not take part in the challenge, but specify that you'll be donating to the American Heart Association, or make up your own challenge? Maybe you disagree with some of the studies funded by the ALS Association. Why not find another organization that suits your ethics and donate to them, instead?

Long story short, I think it's disappointing when we refuse to participate in a good work simply because it doesn't fit our preferences. Most people who perform the Ice Bucket Challenge have probably never made a donation to medical research of any kind. Is it a perfect fundraiser? I don't think so. But it's bringing about good things, and most importantly, encouraging us to think of other ways in which we could bring attention to other equally important issues.