

As both a Community Impact Coordinator for the Lupus Foundation of America, Greater Ohio Chapter, and an African American systemic lupus erythematosus patient, Lupus Awareness Month holds a profound personal and professional significance for me. It is a time to illuminate the challenges faced by those living with lupus, educate the public, and foster support for a community that often feels unseen.

Lupus is a chronic autoimmune disease that affects an estimated 1.5 million Americans, yet its awareness lags far behind other conditions of similar prevalence. For those of us living with systemic lupus erythematosus, the symptoms can be unpredictable and debilitating, ranging from fatigue and joint pain to organ damage and life-threatening complications. In my own journey, lupus has not only impacted my physical health but also required adjustments to my professional and personal life.

As a Community Impact Coordinator, I have the privilege of working directly with individuals and families affected by lupus, hearing their stories, and advocating for the resources they need. Lupus Awareness Month allows us to amplify these voices and bring attention to the disparities in research funding, diagnosis, and treatment access. It is particularly vital to address the inequities faced by communities of color, who are disproportionately affected by lupus and often experience delays in diagnosis.

Awareness is the first step toward change. During this month, we strive to educate the public about the early signs of lupus, emphasize the importance of early diagnosis, and encourage those living with the disease to seek support. Through outreach events, educational campaigns, and community programs, we create spaces for understanding and solidarity.

For me, Lupus Awareness Month is also deeply personal. It is a reminder of the resilience within the lupus community and the importance of continuing the fight for a cure. It is a time to honor the warriors who live with this disease every day and to remember those we have lost.

I urge everyone to take this opportunity to learn more about lupus, support ongoing research, and advocate for policies that improve access to care. Together, we can ensure that no one faces this journey alone.

Thank you

Aletha Acree