

THE LITHIUM CLUB NEWSLETTER

MAY/JUNE 2004

Forthcoming Events

- 1 The Garden Party takes place at Birdbrook Hall on Saturday June 5th. If you would like to attend please would you complete the enclosed form and return it in the envelope provided. Attendance is free and we would love to see you. There will be music provided by a group of young musicians, a professional barbeque, a variety of drinks and a raffle for which prizes would be appreciated.
- 2 Tickets for the Concert to be held on Saturday 2nd October are free to patients but we do need contacting in advance so that we are aware of the number of people we will be catering for. Information on the Concert will be available at the Garden Party. David Starr, a trustee of the Charity, has enabled the Barclays £ for £ scheme to be applied to our Concert this year. The Charity is both delighted and grateful.

Following our request for a new Treasurer in the last newsletter we are pleased to welcome David Cutmore, a qualified accountant and carer, onto the committee as Treasurer for the charity.

Are you more likely to have bouts of depression if you are a perfectionist?

Perfectionists tend to always fall short of the level of achievement that they strive for. Here is a quote from the well known comedian Rowan Atkinson,

'I'm just a perfectionist, which is good in some ways because it makes you strive harder, but not something of which I'm particularly proud. I would agree with anyone who says that perfectionism is a disease, not a quality.'

Do you think that being a perfectionist is a handicap in this life which can lead to frustration and even depression?

Psychological concerns and the nervous system

The spectrum of psychological illnesses is comparable to that of physical illnesses. Despite this, mental illness is still feared in our society and carries a stigma. Nowadays there are effective drugs to control the symptoms of diseases such as schizophrenia and manic depression, and it is a tragedy that anyone suffering from such an illness should miss out on treatment because of ignorance.

*Dr Ann Robinson
The Which? Guide to Personal Health*

The Carer – the importance of Being There

It is hard work being around a depressed person but difficult or not, your presence is very important. A depressed person's most common fear is that of being alone. Simply by being there you are helping, even though he appears to ignore you much of the time. Your presence is reassuring. It shows that you care, that you love him, and that is what a depressed person needs most.

Often it will feel as though you are talking to a brick wall. He does not communicate or respond, unless it is to voice a negative thought.

'I don't know why you bother. I'm not worth it. If I were dead you'd be better off.'

He may have irrational fears, worries that are exaggerated out of all proportion. For instance he may be frightened to drive his car, even though he has been driving for twenty years and it is second nature to him. He may have fears of being thrown out onto the streets, of ending up destitute. He may express a fear of going mad or even dying – *'You don't understand, I'm not going to live through this, I'm going to die.'*

This is a deeply depressed person speaking, totally absorbed in his misery. If your relative is down in the trough of depression you will hear similar fears expressed over and over again. Each time you must counteract them, biting your tongue, counting to ten. Just keep on reassuring him. To the ill person his fears are very real. He wants his pain to end and he doesn't want his family to suffer. Death seems to be the only solution. Your presence, though, puts the brakes on. Perhaps it even gives him a glimmer of hope.

*Living with a Stranger by Valerie Stillwell
Taking a positive approach*



Drawing by Christine Roche

An Impressive Depressive – like so many Bi-polar Patients!

George Gordon Noel Byron (1788 – 1824)

Lord Byron is often irreverently described as one who went from ‘bed to verse’. If this pun was circulated in his lifetime, it may have amused him, because manics have an affection for word-play.

It was more than word-play that rocketed Byron to be a great force in his literary and poetic arena. Despite eccentricities at Dulwich, Harrow and Cambridge, Byron proved only, that these seats of learning could not saddle a genius. He toured further in his quest for facts and inspiration, visiting Albania, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, Switzerland, Spain and Turkey.

In college, it was common to have a bear skin rug but Byron had a real life bear in it.

In 1814, he wrote his magnificent ode to Napoleon Bonaparte, an example of one manic being moved by another of a different type. More similar manics were Byron and Shelley, who met and befriended each other in Switzerland. 1822 saw the cremation of Shelley on a beach, a melancholy sight witnessed by Byron.

Byron was abnormally conceited but perceptive of stimuli. His great wealth was tempered by great generosity and his cynicism was punctuated by kind impulses. If he was a rake or bestower of gifts, his poems showed deep spiritual feelings, which influenced all Europe.

Byron’s understanding of the ups and downs of manic depression were paralleled in his poem to Napoleon.

*“Tis done – but yesterday a King
And armed with Kings to strive –
And now thou art a nameless thing
So abject – yet alive”
“All quell’d – Dark spirit! What must be
The madness of thy memory”*

*By Peter Nolan Lawrence
Impressive Depressives*

A ‘space filler’ by Rosemary Harris

*There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.
She had so many children she didn’t know what to do –
presumably.*

Manic Depression and Psychosis

*"I thought I would... be reborn as a peanut
butter sandwich. On my first day of life
someone would eat me."*

G. Lee
Pendulum

To a 'well' person this remark seems absurd but to a patient having a psychotic episode such a thought can feel part of their view of reality.

Psychosis is one off a group of mental disorders that feature loss of contact with reality. In manic depressive psychosis a lack of being in touch with reality can occur within a depressed or manic state. Thoughts can range from the sublime to the ridiculous and from the amusing to the highly original.

Many readers will be aware that it is a condition that can have both creative and disturbing effects. However most cases of psychotic illness respond well to anti-psychotic drugs, in that while they are being taken, they often induce a state of docility and apparent mental normality.

Two quotes from opposing points of view on the usefulness of a psychotic episode:

From wife and carer – *'The worst thing is that at the time of a psychotic episode the patient does not realise that they are out of touch with the conformity of social norms.'*

From patient and husband – *'Conformity limits social progress, the production of much needed invention and encourages bored minds.'*

John Rook

Happiness is Sacred – a poem by Sally Plumb

*Happiness is sacred
The assassin of sadness
And the beneficiary of love,
Mysterious, and the all being
Relief of doubt.
When the mind evolves gently
Sunshine enters the soul
Giving release to contentment
And then embracing with gratitude.*

If you have any comments on issues raised in this newsletter or any thoughts about topics you would like covered in future newsletters, please write to us at:

The Secretary, The Lithium Club, Birdbrook Hall, Birdbrook, Halstead, Essex CO9 4BJ

Or contact us by e mail at: tlc@birdbrookfarm.com

Compiled by J A J Rook
22.04.04
Edited by Dr A D Broadhurst