

Club News

The concert held on October 2nd proved to be a great success. Many people complimented the magnificent singing from David Starr's choral group Diversity, and also said how much they enjoyed eating lasagne and drinking red wine afterwards in a 16th century listed property. At least four hundred pounds was raised for our charity which will certainly enable next years contact garden party, on June 11th 2005, to be well catered for and will also provide support for our Patients Emergency Fund.

A short time ago I enjoyed a visit from Lisa Hansen, the product manager for Depakote, who is kindly going to provide some useful literature on this new medication. As you may know Depakote is particularly helpful for patients suffering with mania, as well as being likely to act as an anti mood swing medication for patients with bi-polar affective disorder. Lisa kindly said that she would help provide support for our charity and the work we do in the future. Depakote is made by Sanofi-synthelabo.

I have asked two seemingly intelligent members of the public to tell me in their own words, if someone is suffering from bi-polar affective disorder, what is wrong with them? The answers I received were:

- A Someone who has trouble walking and gets dizzy when they stand up, ie someone who has trouble with their feet and head at the same time!

- B Someone who has a lack of balance and tends to fall over!

Our comment

Don't you think 'manic depression' was a much easier phrase to be understood by the general public?

Competition

We are holding our first ever competition, please enter! The first prize is a Rise and Shine clock which has been donated to us. The verdict on this clock is that you can wake to your own personal sunrise.

All you have to do to win this magnificent prize is to write your thoughts on "What I feel are the advantages in this life of being a Bi-polar Affective Disorder Patient." The best letter, as we judge it, will be published and the writer will win this helpful prize. Any other letters that are published will gain the writer a voucher to the value of ten pound. Please do have a go!!

Patient's Letter

Hi John,

I do hope you are keeping well. Thanks for all the newsletters, shame I missed your garden party but I was working! I have now been working a year so I am well proud of that especially since I went full time in January.

With regards to irritability I found that once I was diagnosed and read everything on md that there was very little ever mentioned about irritability but loads of other things I associated with me!!! I used to be very irritable and the most trivial of things would set me off. I felt it must be part of my illness as it happened regularly plus of course the mood swings!!! I carried out more research and did find it listed irritability as a "characteristic" in some articles(mainly American).

Later I went to a Counsellor with my partner and the counsellor said I also had an anger problem and that I had never really dealt with anger. Later went on anger management which was excellent and daily keep myself positive whether I be alone or with others. I have been able to reduce significantly both irritability and anger and this has made my feel a whole lot better. Positive thinking has been the most important tonic after my meds!!!

I think us mds are very complex creatures indeed!!! Hope the above is of some use; if you need further details let me know.

*Take good care,
kind regards,
Christopher Eves*

Dry Mouth?

A dry mouth is sometimes a problem for lithium patients.

Some people try to reduce the problem by drinking high sugar content drinks, such as Cocoa Cola which helps to put on weight, or by sucking sweets which is not good practice in terms of dental care.

We have looked at a number of ways of increasing the saliva in your mouth without encouraging any undesirable side effects.

Artificial saliva tongue sprays give relief to a dry mouth for only a few minutes. They are also difficult at times to use in public. Chewing or sucking almost anything will encourage a flow of saliva, for example a piece of leather! From a user friendly point of view we now recommend a brand new product, AquaDrops, over our previous suggestion of Salivix pastilles. They are sugar free, come in two flavours and are sensibly provided in a small, easy to open plastic container for pocket or handbag.

To quote from their packaging;

“Now when your mouth feels dry you can enjoy the refreshing experience of new, great tasting Aquadrops. With its unique dual action it quickly hydrates and refreshes leaving your mouth feeling cool and fresh again.

Available in Citrus and Apple.”

We know this product is available for between 75 and 80 pence at Boots the Chemist and various other outlets, including petrol stations.

I'm in the Mood

My name is Veronica Collinson and I was diagnosed with bi-polar disorder nine years ago.

“Will the real Veronica Collinson please stand up!”

You see, there is no distraction, the illness is part of me, it **IS NOT** the whole of me, it is a part of me, a part of me that I am not ashamed of. I am, however, angry at times at the illness, it had lousy timing when it first decided to make itself known in my life, I have lost so much because of it, but the same time I have experienced things and people in my life that I simply, do not and cannot regret.

The highs shape my life, the lows shape my life, the thing, well, the problem that I have found with myself having bi-polar disorder, is that I do not simply accept my present mood, I scrutinise it, is it down? is it up? is it stable? should I police it? should I comfort it? should I accept it?

I am a great believer in self-management, but that also means that to do this you should enlist the help of family, friends, doctors, therapists, Community Psychiatric Nurses, they are not the enemy. If a friend or partner says that you're acting in an elated or unusually depressed manner listen, confide how you feel, confirm, reject, keep yourself safe and well, help yourself by monitoring yourself with the help of others.

I am very lucky, not only have I a supportive partner, but I have family, friends, I also have a good GP, psychiatrist, have had some successful Cognitive therapy, and regularly see a CPN.

However, I do take responsibility for my own mental health, I regularly take my medication, from reading literature on bi-polar disorder I believe myself to be a bit of a rapid cycler, though only in mild form because my mediation works effectively to take the brunt of the effects of a massive high and low.

Having bi-polar disorder is not an easy condition to live with, but it is possible, though you have to work on yourself every day, it is your responsibility, learn your triggers by all means, but also learn what eases your highs and lows, having baths, listening to music, sitting in a candlelit room for half an hour to

take your mind off activity and slow your thoughts down. If you have too many thoughts rushing round your head, the last thing you want is more stimuli.

Everybody, bi-polar disorder sufferer or not has moods, we are predisposed to extreme of mood, we must be ready to quash the start of those extremes, listen to the warning signs, ignore that at your peril.

What I have personally found in my own illness is a craving for a bit of instability, my life is and has been for some time very stable, and sometimes this bores me. I just love it when I become that little bit elated, it brightens things up, I go so far, realise, then start to bring myself down a bit, I am so happy, in fact at my happiest when I am busy, but I know that it is important to relax, have meals etc and so I force myself to slow down and not rush here, there and everywhere, it being back some stability to erratic activity, stability I may find boring, but it is good for me, it keeps me well. We as bi-polar disorder sufferers may not crave stability in our elated states but we definitely need it.

*Veronica T Collinson
In Depth Focus – July 2003*

Depakote and sodium valproate are not interchangeable

The Depakote SPC states “To ensure the correct medication is prescribed for the patient's condition, care must be taken not to confuse Depakote with sodium valproate. Patients with bipolar disorder and epilepsy are distinct populations. These differences are reflected in the patient information leaflets, which clearly indicate specific indications for these differing medications.”

Unlike sodium valproate, Depakote is a licensed and evidence-based treatment for a spectrum of bipolar disorder. They are not bioequivalent ie sodium valproate is outside the 80-120% blood valproate concentration range. Depakote may also be better-tolerated dose for dose than other valproate preparations.

It is important to ensure that patients are not switched between Depakote and other valproate preparations since this has been associated with an average 45% reduction in plasma valproate which could result in a risk of relapse potentially resulting in serious consequences for the patient.

Therefore, it is advisable to prescribe Depakote by brand name to avoid confusion, and currently 70% is prescribed by brand. Where the generic name is prescribed, it is important to ensure the patient receives the intended formulation.

If you would like further information on the differences between Depakote and sodium valproate there is a comprehensive fact sheet which you can request by contacting your local representative or our CNS Medical advisor : Dr Adrian Warnock on 01483-554292 or adrian.warnock@sanofi-synthelabo.com.

A research report on 'Family caregiving in depression

Impact on caregivers daily life, distress, and help seeking' from the Journal of Affective Disorders concludes that ; 'Caregiving consequences in depression occur frequently and cause distress in caregivers and patient's children. Attention should be paid to support relatives and spouses of depressed patients. Special attention should be paid to patient's children.'

This is a subject we will be covering more fully in the next newsletter.

SAD Lamps

Seasonal Affective Disorder affects at least 2 million people in Britain each year. Although SAD does not affect bipolar patients any more than other members of the public, it will of course still affect some of you. Typical symptoms include, lethargy, anxiety, irritability and sleep problems.

There is a Happylite Sunshine Simulator which has two soothing glare free 36W 'daylight, balanced' phosphor lamps that emit 10,000 lux, the amount usually prescribed for effective bright light therapy. Exposure to this light reverses the increase of melatonin and decrease of serotonin caused by a lack of light. You should feel the benefit within 10 to 14 days. Measures 19½" x 4", comes with variable mounting options, carry handle and 13 feet of cable for use on a desk or wall. Priced at £139.95 the Happylite is available by calling 0870 600 4444.

All SAD lights are quite expensive, but they can really help a patient, by giving extra natural light in your room and should last you through many winters.

OutsideIn (Cambridge) Ltd manufacture a wide range of SAD lamps, body clocks, window lights etc. The cheapest single item is £60 ranging up to £285. Further information and advice is available by contacting this office or OutsideIn by telephone on 01954 211955 or on their website www.outsidein.co.uk.

Your chairman has used a SAD lamp on his desk for the last four winters and finds it to be very helpful.

A Guernsey Church magazine suggests that if you can identify with any of the following criteria, you have reached '**Le Troisieme age**':

When the glint in your eye is nothing but the sun shining on your bifocals.

You ache everywhere, except in parts which don't function at all.

You feel as one feels the morning after the night before, but you did nothing the night before.

You get breathless just playing cards.

The only names in your little address book begin with "Dr".

Your children begin to look middle aged.

You look forward to being able to spend a quiet night at home.

You need spectacles to find your spectacles.

You have a spare tyre and your knees buckle.

You have clever answers but no one asks the right questions.

You decide to take your revenge and live longer to annoy your heirs.

But also take heart; "Age is a grace that must be merited and not a weight that crushes us".



Everybody at our office would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas. Your squiggle pen comes with our complements. The next newsletter will be the January/February edition. Don't forget to contact us if there is anything you would like us to include. Don't forget to enter our competition, the closing date is Tuesday 30th November. The timing of this will enable the winner to use the Rise and Shine clock for their benefit during the dark days of winter.

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