

Club News

Summer Garden Party

All our plans for the Summer Garden Party are going ahead well. As you know the date of the party is Saturday 11th June at Birdbrook Hall starting at 12 noon and continuing all afternoon. All patients and carers are most welcome to come along free of charge, and there is a small charge of £5 for any friends they would like to bring with them.

Concert

The Autumn Concert will be held on Saturday 1st October. We are delighted that this year guests will be able to enjoy drinks and a buffet after the Concert in the magnificent surroundings of The Great Hall at Moyns Park. The Moyns Park venue has been kindly offered to us by the owners Mr and Mrs John Gardiner.

The Lithium Club Library

If you are interested in borrowing books from our ever increasing library please contact us for a copy of the books available.

Competition

We received many completed answers to the WordSearch competition in our last newsletter. Well done!! The first prize was won by Peter Carpenter and the runners up were Mrs S Elton and Mrs J Clowes. The missing country was of course Norway.

Do please try the competition on the last page of this newsletter. The winner will be deemed the person with the most correct answers and will receive the first prize. Should more than one person have the same number of correct answers the winner's name will be drawn at random. Please send entries to reach this office by 31st March.

Message from a patient

22nd December 2004

"I wonder if you can help; my wife is currently on Lithium (600 mil) for clinical depression, as well as anti-depressants. She has noticed an increase in weight and acute tiredness. Are these due to the Lithium and is there any thing we can do to counteract this?"

The tiredness is the main problem all she wants to do is sleep, which is making life difficult for the both of us.

Your advice would be greatly appreciated."

Dear XXXXXX

Some patients on lithium do put on weight. This is a well known side effect for a few people. Sometimes the weight gain can be caused by a patient drinking too many sweet drinks, such as Coca Cola in order to relieve the thirst demanding effect of lithium.

Tiredness is not a side effect of lithium. Almost certainly Barbara, like so many people is suffering from SAD. This is a form of depression which commonly occurs during the dark winter months. It can cause patients to feel tired, lethargic and sleep quite a lot. One form of help is light therapy, a firm called Outside In which is based in Cambridge and can be contacted on

01954 780 500 or their website which is www.outsidein.co.uk sells appropriate lamps and lights. Of course another way is to go on holiday to somewhere sunny.

The other alternative is for Barbara to see her doctor who may change her anti-depressant. Some anti-depressants have a sedative effect. Her doctor could choose an anti-depressant that is free of this side effect.

Don't get too worried "Winter Blues" is very common amongst a wide range of people and is a common problem for everyone and is not a special problem for manic depressives.

Reply by J A J Rook

Patients Quotes

"I am my disorder": Over identifying as a coping style

"I've become very worried about having another episode. I keep thinking that even the smallest thing will push me over the edge – a glass of wine, travelling, eating a rich dessert, even just going to the store. My husband wants me to do more, like go with him to restaurants or shows, but I'm afraid going out will make me manic. I'm now leading a pretty sheltered life, I guess."

A 58 year old woman in a depressed phase of bipolar I disorder

"I miss my high periods"

"Does a fish know when it's wet? Hypomania felt good to me. I felt like I was finally getting there in my life. It didn't feel at all like there was anything wrong to me, it felt great, and I'd been feeling bad for so long. So I went off my medication, and then I started getting higher and higher. People told me to go back on, but it felt patronising. I resented their lack of recognition that I was accomplishing things. I told them, 'You don't understand, you've got me in a box, you're sticking me in one of your categories.' But then I cycled into depression and got suicidal. I went back to my doc and – wouldn't you know it – back on lithium."

A 38 year old man with bipolar I disorder, reviewing his most recent mood cycle

Maintaining wellness: Maintaining regular daily and nightly routines

"I really feel that I benefited from psychoanalysis. I was in it four times a week. But I don't think it was all that learning about my childhood. There was something very therapeutic about always having a place to go to in the morning, seeing the same therapist every day, seeing the same attendant in the parking lot, getting back in my car at the same time. I found all of that structure very comforting."

A 40 year old woman with bipolar II disorder

A Maintaining Wellness Tip – suits quite a number of patients

"How Can I Regulate my Daily Routines?"

Keeping regular routines sounds straightforward, but if you've ever tried to do it, you know that significant challenges are likely to arise. You can do this alone, but a therapist may be able to help you develop and keep 'target times' for various activities, such as sleep and exercise.

The first, most important ingredient is to go to bed at the same time every night and wake up at the same time every morning. Try to maintain this pattern on weekends, even when you would rather sleep late. Of course, there will be times when getting to bed at your target hour or waking at a specific time is impossible, such as when you travel, have social plans on a weekend, have a sick child or need to get up extra early to pick up someone at the train station. Some of these events will be controllable by you (for example, whether to go to the early or late showing of a certain movie) and some will not (for example the timing of an airline flight). If your schedule is shifted by an hour or two on a given night, try to reinstate your original sleep-wake target times as soon as possible.

Try to maintain your sleep patterns even if events conspire to make you change them. For example, if you have lost your job, try to get up at the same time you would have got up when you were going in to work. If your new job requires different hours (say getting to work by 8am instead of 9am) adjust your bedtime to an hour earlier. It's best to ease into your new schedule gradually rather than suddenly.

You can also work with your therapist to anticipate events that will change your daily routines, and plan ways to regulate yourself once these events occur. For example, if you know that you may be changing jobs soon or travelling more in the near future, you can anticipate that your sleep will be disrupted. Make plans, in advance, to go to bed and wake up at consistent times, even after these disruptive events have occurred.

Second, if you have been having trouble sleeping try to avoid 'sleep binging' in which you catch up from all the lost sleep during the week by sleeping more on weekends. You'll probably find that sleep binging has a negative impact on your mood (typically depression). It also makes it harder to sleep the next night.

Third, try to see if you can maintain the same hours each day at work or school. For example, try to take classes during the same interval each day. Try to avoid having all of your classes on one or two days and none on the other three. To parallel your regular job hours, try to exercise at the same time (for example just after work) rather than late in the evening on one night and then early in the morning the next day. Avoid having your most stimulating interactions with partners, friends or co-workers right before you go to sleep.

*Bipolar Disorder Survival Guide
David J. Miklowitz PhD*

Discontinuation of long-term medicines

The risk of relapse remains, even after years of sustained remission. If discontinuation of medicines is considered, it should be accompanied by an informed assessment of the potential costs and dangers. Discontinuation of any medicine should normally be tapered over at least two weeks and preferably longer. Early relapse to mania is a specific early risk of abrupt lithium discontinuation. Discontinuation of medicines should not be equated with withdrawal of services to patients.

*Journal of Psychopharmacology
December 2003*

How Effective is Lithium?

Several hundred thousand people in America take lithium to control their bipolar illness, and it is felt that it may also be the drug of choice for more than 20 percent of depressed patients who will eventually experience a manic episode. Patients who had their first depressive episode – especially if psychotic – in their late teens or early twenties and who have bipolar family members are at high risk. Because these clinical and familiar markers are so predictable of mania within three years, Dr. Hagop Akiskal recommends prophylactic lithium for those patients to prevent the occurrence of disruptive manic episodes during crucial developmental stages – when they are in school or in the early stages of their careers. He reassesses the need for continued lithium once they have achieved stable vocational status.

Lithium, for reasons not fully understood, both treats and prevents. When someone is manic, lithium can often stop the mania in its tracks. And when a level state has been achieved, it helps ward off future manias and depressions. “That happens,” says the University of Pennsylvania’s Dr. Jay Amsterdam, “because the drug is treating the same illness whether it is expressed in mania or depression. It stabilizes the metabolism of the nerve cells involved in a person’s mood swings.”

Patients taking lithium for the first time often expect an instant miracle, but the drug’s effects are more subtle. It usually takes from ten days to three weeks before it starts working. When it does, nothing dramatic usually happens. Mood swings generally become fewer and briefer and are not as severe. Twenty percent of those who take it regularly are relieved of all symptoms; fifty percent substantially improve. Thirty percent don’t respond at all and need other kinds of treatment.

Patty Duke 1995

A Poem by Sally Plumb

Bird on the wing
Sing to me
Bring to me, freedom
And sky.
Stay with the blue
But ring true
To me.
Be secure with your spirit
And fly.

We love to hear from patients, carers or other supporters of our charity on any topic relating to either the newsletter or matters concerning the work we do. So please do take part in our competition as well as writing to us on any topic that particularly interests you. We are always happy to publish articles sent into us when requested to do so by the author.

*Compiled by J A J Rook
21.02.05
Edited by Dr A D Broadhurst*

TLC Competition – DINGBATS

Find the familiar phrase, name or saying in each arrangement of letters or symbols.

Examples

<p>CYCLE CYCLE CYCLE</p>	<p>VALUE VALUE VALUE VALUE</p>	<p>ON THE THE</p>
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Answers

Tricycle

For what it's worth

On the double

<p>SE MI</p>	<p>GOOD MISS GOOD MISS</p>	<p>WORKED</p> <hr/> <p>PAID</p>	<p>OFTEN OFTEN NOT OFTEN NOT OFTEN NOT</p>	<p>STAY 111 WELCOME</p>
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<p>CHAT </p>	<p>GRAB GRAB GRAB GRAB</p>	<p>THINK THINK SELF THINK THINK</p>	<p>NIL SHOW IT SHOW IT IT IT</p>	<p>LUCIFER MEDITERRANEAN COBALT</p>
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<p>M IN D M IN D</p>	<p>ECNALG</p>	<p>MAN</p> <hr/> <p>BOARD</p>	<p>T O U C H</p>	<p>E G S G G G S E S G E G G S G E</p>
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Please complete with your name and address and send to The Lithium Club Competition, Birdbrook Hall, Birdbrook, Halstead, Essex CO9 4BJ

Name:

Address:

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