

Club News

Concert

The Concert held on 1st October attracted one hundred and twenty people. It was a great success. After some splendid music by the group Diversity managed by David Starr, everyone enjoyed supper at the excellent Elizabethan mansion at Moyns Park.

Garden Party

The party is planned to take place on Saturday 10th June 2006. Please keep this date free.

The Charity's Funds

I am delighted to tell you that we have received a significant grant towards our core funds from Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales. This is a 'one off' payment which will be a tremendous help to our ongoing costs.

Lithium, Salt and Water

The most serious concern is that, over time, lithium could affect the kidneys, primarily in people with pre-existing kidney disease. The danger exists because of the delicate balance of sodium chloride (salt), water and lithium that must be maintained. If the body becomes depleted of sodium (as often happens to someone taking diuretics), the kidneys will retain lithium to compensate for the loss of sodium, making the lithium level rise. Similarly, if a person becomes dehydrated (through sweating, vomiting or a protracted bout of diarrhoea), lithium will drain from the kidneys more slowly and concentrate in the body. That's why patients who attempt to avoid the frequency of urination that may accompany lithium use by restricting fluids are headed for trouble. In fact, the increase in thirst often precipitated by lithium is the body's natural protection against the dangerous dehydration.

Travellers too must be conscious of the prevalence of gastrointestinal infections in certain countries, especially those with tropical climates. The resulting fever, vomiting and diarrhoea, if unchecked, can be dangerous to someone on lithium. So doctors advise their travelling patients to see a physician if they contract any undiagnosed gastrointestinal disorder while out of the country. If that is not possible and their doctor at home is not reachable, they might need to stop taking lithium temporarily. It is not harmful to stop lithium abruptly except for the possible return of mania or depression.

Anyone who has diabetes, hypertension or congenital kidney defects or who takes analgesics (such as aspirin) chronically must be vigilant because all of those conditions affect kidney function.

Because symptoms that the kidneys are being adversely affected may not be readily apparent and because comfortable blood levels of lithium do not guarantee that all is well, patients must be exquisitely tuned in to their bodies. If warning signs such as confusion, nausea and vomiting, upset stomach or dizziness begin they need to get in touch with their doctor immediately. These signs can be the forerunners of something serious and the drug may need to be stopped or reduced to prevent escalating toxic effects – seizures, coma and

even death. Fluids such as orange juice and water, always important, may need to be increased to maintain metabolic balance.

A perk of taking lithium includes its possible boost to the immune system. Many people say that they have fewer colds and flu and there are anecdotal reports that men taking lithium have fewer heart attacks than would be expected. No one knows for sure whether the diminishing of mood-related stress or some direct effect of the drug is responsible.

Pregnant women are advised not to take lithium, at least for the first trimester, because it can cause heart defects in the unborn child. And mothers who are breast-feeding should not take lithium because the drug is present in breast milk at about 80 to 100 percent of the level in her blood; what is therapeutic for the mother may be poison for the baby because of the vast difference in their size, weight and body mass.

However, it is not only problems with the body's salt/water balance that can cause toxicity to lithium. Ageing itself is accompanied by normal changes in the way the kidneys work. As people get older, the kidneys capacity to excrete diminishes, so the lithium level may need adjusting.

However, with all of these cautions, carefully prescribed dosages and regular monitoring of patients on lithium make it one of the safest medication, one that has revolutionised the treatment of mood disorders.

*A Brilliant Madness
Patty Duke*

I play guitar in a band, enjoy reading and smoking an occasional cigarette. I like hanging out with my friends and have a tendency to fall off bikes. I also happen to have manic depression. Bollocks! My life is made up of many facets and whilst manic depression is a major influence it is still only a part of me. True, there are times when life feels bleak and hopeless, but I have learned over the years, with the help of those around me – professional, family and friends – that even when I doubt it most, there IS light at the end of the tunnel. Hope is a valuable word and hey – this is MY life and I intend to live it! That's all any of us can do. So I will continue to play my guitar, see my friends and deal with a condition that has shaped my personality; teaching me how important it is to value the good in life.

*A quote from Suzy Johnston author of
Walking on Eggshells*

Twentieth Century Opinions on Manic Depression

Several people have espoused the idea that manic-depressives have been disproportionately numerous among people of high achievement. In 1931 Ernst Kretschmer published *The Psychology of men of Genius*, in which he identified manic-depression not only in men of genius, but also in their families. He said that there was a resemblance between mania and periods of creative productivity, while depression is similar to periods of sterility. He concluded that, while severe states of manic-depression were counterproductive, talent could not achieve the level of genius without assistance from the milder states of the illness. In words that foreshadowed recent findings about the biochemistry of manic-depression, Kretschmer said: "The spirit of genius ... is

no free floating, absolute power, but is strictly bound to the laws of blood and chemistry and the endocrine glands.”

In 1960, Lord Russell Brain, in *Some Reflections on Genius*, retreated somewhat from Kretschmer’s position, stating only that manic-depression and genius were “closely related”.

The most recent discussions of manic-depression and creativity have been more limited in that they have not addressed the question of genius or distinguished between the lower and higher levels of achievement. Nancy Andreasen, who investigated fifteen writers, confirmed Kretschmer’s conclusion that severe states of the illness interfered with work or decreased its quality. She found that milder manic and depressive states enhanced specific aspects of creativity. She also attributed Martin Luther’s role in history in part to his manias and depressions and concluded, “A variety of artistes, writers, statesmen, philosophers and scientists have suffered from disorders of mood.”

In *Moodswings*, Dr Ronald Fieve commented that mild mania enhances creativity, and that many of the eminent people in various fields have been manic-depressives. In common with Kretschmer, he concluded that mania and depression are similar to creative fertility and sterility but denied that creativity required manic-depression.

Manic Depression and Creativity
D. Jablow Hershman & Julian Lieb, M.D.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)

CBT aims to help you to love your life more successfully, by looking at the way you respond to what happens to you. It helps you to find a way to change that response, so that you cope better with challenges, and are less likely to have a crisis. CBT is used in the treatment of manic depression to:

- Increase people’s knowledge of the condition
- Try to create routines for sleep, meals and exercise, so that they are less likely to relapse
- Increase awareness of changing moods
- Anticipate potentially stressful events, so as to minimise crises
- Develop crisis management strategies.

Successful CBT may decrease the need for lithium treatment.

Making Sense of Lithium
MIND.

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.

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