



Otago Mental Health Support Trust

Bipolar Network & Signpost

Information

Support

Education

Advocacy

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BIPOLAR NETWORK/
SIGNPOST

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OPEN

Monday – Friday
10 am – 3 pm

Sometimes due to the nature of our work we may be out of the office. If that is the case leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as possible

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Book Review

LIVES MOVING FORWARD

Lives Moving Forward appears at first glance to be a beautifully presented collection of recovery tales in the style of the Mental Health Commission's *A Gift of Stories*. It is something else.

It rapidly becomes clear to the reader that the "recovery" in each of the stories was almost entirely attributed to "...the new medication", a phrase which was repeated thirty nine times throughout the book (shades of John Buchan!). The "new medication" appears to be olanzapine, if we are to go by an endorsement in the book from Dunedin psychiatrist Jubilee Rajiah.

Direct to consumer advertising of medicines in New Zealand is strictly controlled by law. Advertisements must be balanced and must not "prey on the vulnerability of particular audiences". If this publication is looked at as advertising then it will hardly meet those requirements. It certainly does not contain enough information, particularly on the risks of taking Olanzapine, for anyone to make an informed choice whether or not to consider taking this drug.

Whose lives are moving forward?

NEW TO THE LIBRARY

Brainbows and Poems from the Bin

Two collections of poems by Graham Johnson

Lithium

Lithium works too well I fear.
The fire is gone, the dark draws in.
The images have disappeared
Behind the fog it leaves you in.
It's life Jim – but not as I knew it –
The sparkle isn't there.
The ones who judge are satisfied
and I'm too drugged to care.

By Graham Johnson

WINTER SOLE-STICE



Despite authentic mid-winter weather conditions the mid-winter party held at Artsenta on 29th June was enjoyed by all.

The musicians entertained us superbly. There was plenty to drink (non-alcoholic) and the fish and chip supper went down a treat (purchased from *Mornington Takeaways* - good effort from you guys) Throughout the evening spot prizes were distributed and almost everyone received one thanks to the following who kindly donated:

Metro, Black Dog, Mokha, The Ra Bar(coffee vouchers), **Rialto Cinema** (movie tickets), **The Universal Centre** (massage), **Sandra Boock** (Avon goodies), **H.Sue**(writing Pads), **J.Idour**(handknitted scarves), **B.Chatfield** (framed art-work) and **Guilty by Confection** (selection of delectable goodies).

DISCLAIMER

The opinions and research articles expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the Otago Mental Health Support Trust or anyone associated with the organization.

Omega-3: The real oil discovery?

There have been rumours for some time that fish oil, and in particular oils called omega-3, might be useful for people recovering from bipolar disorder. Is this just the latest natural health fad or does omega-3 really look like a new direction in treatment for bipolar disorder? We asked Dunedin Hospital pharmacist Lucy Broughton for the real oil on omega-3.

Lucy was cautiously optimistic. She explained that omega-3 is an essential fatty acid. This means that it is required by the body for biochemical processes, not just for fuel. It also means that we need to get omega-3 from our food as the body cannot make it. Omega-3 used to be called vitamin F but is now classified as a fat rather than a vitamin. Lucy quotes one study which shows that in countries where a lot of seafood is eaten, there are lower than usual rates of depression, bipolar depression and postpartum depression. In general terms, epidemiologists have found that consumption of 2 or 3 seafood meals per week is associated with lower rates of depression. There are also many studies which clearly show that omega-3 is beneficial for our heart and vascular system. Some researchers suggest that this may be particularly important for people taking psychotropic medication that may be at risk from smoking and from medication related obesity and diabetes.

There have been at least four positive clinical trials of omega-3 in people diagnosed with bipolar disorder. The trials were of omega-3 compared to a placebo of olive oil or paraffin. Omega-3 was given to these people in addition to any medication they may already have been taking, although people taking no medication also responded exceptionally well to omega-3. Overall in these four studies, people with bipolar disorder stayed well for longer when taking omega-3. The suggestion was more of a protection against depression than against mania.

Two other studies, in people with acute bipolar depression or rapid cycling did not show any beneficial effect of omega-3. However, the suggestion again from the researchers is that omega-3 may be useful in preventing mood extremes rather than for treating acute episodes.

So how did people in these trials tolerate the omega-3, which was given in gelatine capsules at 1 or 2 grams per day, and was derived from fish oils, exactly as you might find at a health food shop.

Omega-3 continued:

Were there any dreaded "side effects"? Some people complained of a fishy aftertaste although interestingly this was also reported by people getting the olive oil. The most common complaint was of loose stools and there were some reports of nosebleeds, belching and nausea.

This sounds like good news. Here is a substance which occurs naturally in our diet, which is likely to have substantial physical benefits, and which may well help to keep our mood in a healthy range. Lucy explained that omega-3 is actually made up of three different oils called ALA, EPA and DHA. The studies show that our Western diet is low in EPA so it is this that should think about boosting. Health food shops sell omega-3 supplement which contain 180mg of EPA per capsule. You would need to take 5 or 6 capsules per day to get the 1 gram which is recommended. As Lucy says "...not a cheap option!". Actually, this would cost 50 to 60 cents per day so is affordable for many people. Other sources of omega-3 include flaxseed, walnuts, wheat germ, and plant-based omega-3 tablets. However, these contain mostly ALA which the body then has to convert to EPA and that is not a very efficient process. As the best source of omega-3 seems to be from fish, what sort of fish and how much of it would we need to eat to be getting a gram of omega-3?

I spent some time hanging around the canned fish section of the supermarket gathering data. Salmon, both red and pink varieties claim the highest omega-3 levels. Mackerel and tuna have somewhat lower levels. Fresh fish of course is not labelled for its omega-3 content but there are reports that it is similar to canned fish. Unfortunately, to get a gram daily of EPA from canned fish would require that you eat a 210 gram can of the best red salmon every day, about \$4 to \$5 per day! Still, that is more achievable than getting our omega-3 from 5.58kg of beef or 10kg of spinach per day!

On balance, the most sensible advice seems to be the same as all other nutritional advice. Eat a varied diet. Include plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables and nuts. Eat two good meals of fish per week. A salmon sandwich is as good as you can get. Avoid fatty and processed food. Avoid or cut down on corn, soy, canola, safflower and sunflower oil and margarine of any sort and replace them with olive oil.

It seems that we are unlikely to get a gram of EPA in our diets each day unless we are popping fish oil capsules from a health food shop. However, as the data from clinical trials is so supportive of the beneficial effects of omega-3 in mood disorders, it may be that we should be asking our psychiatrists to prescribe it.

Canned Tuna Fish Lasagne/Lasagna

Ingredients

2 tbsps oil
 1 onion, peeled and finely chopped
 1 clove garlic, peeled and crushed
 1 can (185g) tuna (drained)
 1 can (400g) tinned plum tomatoes
 1 Italian stock cube/1 tspn dried basil and oregano

Cheese Sauce: 1 pint (700ml) milk
 1 tbspn cornflour or thickening agent you usually use
 1 tspn english mustard powder
 8 oz (225g) hard cheese, grated
 freshly milled pepper to taste. Sheets of lasagna

Set your oven to Gas Mark 4, 350F or 180C whilst you assemble the lasagne. Heat the oil in a pan, add the onion and garlic and cook until softened. Add the tomatoes, tuna and stock cube or herbs and simmer until thickened.

Cheese Sauce

Heat the milk in a pan, reserving a little to mix the cornflour and mustard to a smooth paste. When the milk comes to the boil, take it off the heat and stir in your cornflour or thickener. Return to the heat and stir for a minute. Add the grated cheese and adjust the seasoning. Assemble the lasagne, layers of tuna sauce and sheets of lasagne, finishing off with lasagne topped with cheese sauce. Bake in the oven for about 40 minutes. Serve with crusty bread and salad.

Canned Tuna Fish with Spaghetti The canned tuna fish recipe for lasagne can be used with other pastas. Use it with spaghetti, tagliatelle, macaroni or whatever pasta shapes you have in your cupboard. Finish off with freshly grated parmesan for a really tasty quick and easy meal.

Don't Keep this News Confidential!!

At the end of June, newspapers throughout the country released the report of the **Confidential Forum** for Former In-Patients of Psychiatric Hospitals.

The forum visited 22 locations around the country between July 2005 and April 2007, including 11 days in Dunedin. Nearly 500 people, including former in-patients (82 percent), family members of former in-patients (17 percent), and former staff members (6 percent) took the opportunity to relate their experiences of psychiatric institutions in New Zealand in the years before November 1992.

We would like to acknowledge the courage of all the people the Otago Mental Health Support Trust supported throughout the forum. It was a humbling and privileged experience to walk alongside those people whose lives were changed forever; they survived and recovered. We remember those who did not survive.

To Anne Helm we echo the sentiments posted on the Balance web page: *"Special recognition and thanks go to Anne Helm for her strength, courage and tenacity in seeing the process through to its conclusion, and to her supporters. Anne's role as the only consumer on the forum panel was a monumental challenge, and one she has carried through with aroha, grace and dignity. We extend our congratulations and thanks to Anne and the Forum team, and our heartfelt condolences to those who grieve for the people who did not survive the hopelessness of institutions where these appalling events took place."*

The report can be viewed at:

http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/wpg_URL/Agency-Confidential-Forum-for-Former-In-Patients-of-Psychiatric-Hospitals-Index?OpenDocument

(We also have several copies of the printed report if you wish to read this here in our office).

The "mental health system" has changed since 1992. There is talk of rights and recovery and promises of new wonder drugs. Two questions need to be foremost in our minds. Is there any real evidence that the new treatments are improving people's quality of life or reducing suicide rates? And have people's attitudes towards their fellow human beings changed? Before 1992 people who questioned their prescribed treatment would hear "If you don't consent we will section you". The words are still heard in 2007.

A 3 Step Routine for Creating Energy that Lasts All Day by John Wesley www.pickthebrain.com

One of the most popular excuses people rely on is a lack of energy. When we feel tired we give up early. It's impossible to be enthusiastic when you're exhausted. Energy is the difference between having a fantastic, productive day and merely going through the motions. For most of my life I considered myself a low energy person. By nature I'm a night person. I've always been groggy in the mornings and I assumed there was nothing to be done about it. Recently I've come to realize that *what you do* is far more important than *who you are*. By starting off your day with this simple 3 step routine you can **create a boost of energy that lasts all day** — leading to higher levels of happiness, productivity, and fitness.

(3 step routine Contd.) **Step 1 - Jump Out of Bed**

Sleep feels great. When you're in that warm cocoon between the sheets you never want to leave. I used to linger in bed, hitting the snooze button multiple times before reluctantly rising. This sets a lethargic tone for the entire day.

Getting up is inevitable, so you might as well do it quickly. As soon as the alarm goes off, jump out of bed. This energetic movement rouses you immediately. Make some other quick movements too. I usually swing my shoulders, hop around, or do a silly dance step. It might look ridiculous, but movement shakes off the cobwebs and gets you excited. Try it and you'll be amazed how much the way you move affects the way you think and feel.

Step 2 - Exercise

Right after getting up, take action. Have your gear next to the bed so you don't waste time. Go straight into 30-60 minutes of vigorous exercise. You're probably thinking, "**Exercise in the morning?** You've got to be kidding. I have a hard enough time exercising at all." I used to feel the same way, but after starting I couldn't go back. Exercise in the morning has immense benefits. First, it raises your metabolism. This creates a natural buzz that burns calories all day. Second, it gives you the opportunity to plan out your day. Deciding exactly what you need to achieve helps you prioritize. This allows you to start working on what's important without hesitation. Third, it starts the day with a positive accomplishment. Don't you feel proud of yourself after exercise? This creates momentum and self confidence that will improve your mindset for the rest of the day.

Step 3 - Eat a Solid Breakfast

Your body needs fuel. There is no substitute for a solid breakfast, especially if you want to get in great shape. Not eating leads to binging later on. It slows your metabolism to a crawl so you don't burn as many calories. When I skip breakfast I feel tired, irritated, and always end up eating junk half way through the morning. Get into the habit of doing this every day and you won't stop.

Pretty simple isn't it? The main reason most people don't do these 3 things is that they believe it takes too much time. This is a weak excuse. **By investing time in energizing yourself you create many more productive hours than you expend.**

MARRY-GO-ROUND

If you love something, set it free. If it returns you have not lost it. If it disappears and never returns, then it was never yours to begin with. If, on the other hand, it just sits there watching television, unaware that it has been set free - then you probably married it. - Anonymous

Is parking your car in Dunedin driving you round the bend? Spare a thought for drivers on this Wellington road!!



WOMEN'S GROUP (Meet at rooms 1pm)

- Wednesday 15th August, 2007
Clothing exchange afternoon.
- Wednesday 19th September, 2007
Swimming

Shared - LUNCH
Monthly at our rooms
Tuesday August 14th 12 noon (KFC \$4)
Tuesday September 11th 12 noon (pizza \$3)

OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD) SUPPORT NETWORK

We are a small informal group of people who have experience of OCD. We meet on the first Tuesday of every month 7pm to 8.30pm at the Signpost/Bipolar rooms in Dunedin. The Christchurch OCD Support Group provides us with resources and information and has a website (www.ocd.org.nz) that may be of interest. If you or someone you know experiences worrying thoughts or repetitive behaviour and would like to contact us, please do so through Signpost/Bipolar Network
Ph: 477-2598.

Someone will provide you with the contact number for one of our members.

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ, Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit, Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.
Omar Khayyam

EVENTS

FREE BIPOLAR EDUCATION SESSIONS

- Introduction: What is Bipolar?
- How to keep well.
- Treatments.
- Relationships.

GROUPS HELD IN:

- ALEXANDRA-
TUESDAY 21ST AUGUST 10AM – 4PM
- BALCLUTHA -
THURSDAY 30TH AUGUST 10AM – 4PM
- DUNEDIN-
HELD OVER 4 EVENINGS, SEPTEMBER 5TH,
12TH, 17TH AND 24TH.

Open to people with bipolar, family, friends, and support people. Please contact us to book your place:
Ph. (03) 477-2598 Cell ph. (021) 185-0078
E-mail: otagomd@es.co.nz

Mosgiel Bipolar Support Group

Exciting news! A NEW bipolar peer support group is starting in Mosgiel. Come along, have a cuppa and join in.

*Where: Mosgiel Abilities Resource Centre
16 Green Street.*

*When: Thursday August 16th 1pm to 3pm.
Enquiries to Denise 4772598*

Visit our Website at:

www.bipolarotago.balance.org.nz
(Thanks to Balance for hosting the site)

An Online Bipolar Forum

http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/bipolar_and_borderline/

Do you find this newsletter useful? Would you like to stop getting it? Would you like to get it by email? Let us know. Email us at: otagomd@es.co.nz

Many thanks to those who recycled computers. More are welcome. They are going to good homes!! Computer coaching is also available. Ask at the office.