

A day in the life of a support worker of the Otago Mental Health Support Trust

8.30am arrived at the office. 5 messages on the phone: a person we support, desperate to get in touch with a support worker, a call informing us that a person we support will be leaving Respite care at 3pm. A supportive phone call will be made as it will be difficult returning home, a person advising us of their imminent discharge from hospital and requiring help to arrange transport home. I rang and ensured transport was arranged and reassured this person of our weekly visits to her home continuing; a call from out of town asking for a return call. This done, a meeting was arranged for later in the week. After discussing issues, I liaised with both Winz and the Budgeting Service on behalf of this person.

10.00am went with work colleague to Otago Polytechnic OT department to present potential project to students who will be with us on placement in April. Also liaised with their tutor to arrange the placement details.

12 noon back at the office, cleared and responded to phone messages again. A student, doing an assignment on Bipolar disorder, had phoned wanting to call for information. Made arrangements to meet her in our rooms. Call from the South Community Mental Health Team to advise us who, on their team, will be the PDN for a person we support. A call from Disability Information Service re arrangements for the health expo to be held in Alexandra in April. (We give presentations on Bipolar each year at this expo.) A further call from the discharged person to advise she had arrived home safely. Call to further discuss support matters, help was needed with an overdue account which had occurred while manic and in hospital. Outward call to Budget services. Call from Youthline with a request for training around mental health and Bipolar disorder issues for their counsellors. A call confirming attendance at our Women's Group on Friday. This selection is about half of the day's calls.

2.15pm off to Winz to advocate for a person who is moving house and needing help with rent and bond.

4.00p.m. a pre-arranged visit to the home of a person we support. This person has been unwell and behaving in a way which felt unsafe for the neighbour. Our role was to advocate and to help mend relationships with the neighbour and neighbour's support people.

5.30pm finish for the day and off home.

From our archives – 2003 Scientists Find Bipolar Gene

by Malcolm Ritter, AP Science Writer

Scientists say they've identified a flawed gene that appears to promote bipolar, a finding that could eventually help guide scientists to new treatments.

A particular variant of the gene was associated with only about 3% of cases in a study, but researchers said other variants might be involved with more.

Follow-up research might help reveal the mysterious underlying biology that makes some people susceptible to the disorder, and so help scientists devise new treatments, said the study's senior author, Dr John Kelsoe of the University of California in San Diego.

Previous studies have suggested that other genes are involved in bipolar. But one expert, Dr Melvin McInnis of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, said in an interview that he thinks Kelsoe's new work and another recent study provide the strongest evidence for involvement of particular genes in the disease.

Bipolar, which affects about 2.3 million American adults, involves episodes of depression and mania, states of abnormally high mood or irritability. While effective treatment is available, scientists would like to find better medications.

Genetics clearly play a role. Kelsoe's work focused on a gene called GRK3, which influences the brain's sensitivity to chemical messages brain cells send each other. Defects in the gene might promote bipolar by making people over-sensitive to these messages, which are carried by dopamine and other substances, he said. Kelsoe also found statistical evidence tying a particular variant of the gene to the disorder.

I want to be bipolar!

Recently on the BBC News website psychiatrist Dr Diana Chan explained that some people these days are actually asking to be diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Given the stigma that clings to mental illness, it seems highly unusual that some people are now actively seeking out a diagnosis of mental illness and want to be known as bipolar. Dr. Chan believes “the phenomenon could be due to increased public awareness through the internet, radio and TV, coupled with the willingness of celebrities to talk about their own personal experiences of mental illness. This appears to have made the disorder less of a stigma, and more acceptable to the public. A new diagnosis of bipolar disorder might also reflect a person's aspiration for higher social status and a feeling that by having the condition they too are creative.

Indeed, the highly intelligent and creative Stephen Fry, who has talked very frankly about his own experiences certainly appears to have promoted bipolar disorder as less stigmatising and more acceptable to the public.” Dr Chan stresses that bipolar is not to be taken lightly. “It is a serious condition that may significantly impair relationships, work and social functioning. It is important for psychiatrists to make the diagnosis when valid. Conversely, it is equally essential to help people that desire the diagnosis to understand that having 'mood

swings' or chaotic and disorderly behaviour does not necessarily mean that they are suffering from bipolar disorder.”

People commenting on Dr. Chan's article are vociferous. R. of Glasgow says “I wouldn't wish my bipolar on my worst enemy. It is a terrifying, destructive illness that destroys life as you know it and it takes a long time to learn how to manage. Anyone who thinks it is cool needs their head examined. They can live my life for a week and see if they want it then.”

Nicola of Cumbria says “Why anyone desires this diagnosis is beyond me. People need to realise that mood swings are perfectly normal and part of being human and do not mean you are bipolar. It is extremes of mood that last more than a couple of weeks that indicate a mental illness - again not necessarily bipolar...”

Answers to Winter Quiz

1. I Love Lucy - 2. Dick van Dyke Show
3. Married with Children -
4. Dennis the Menace
5. Mr Ed - 6. Bewitched -
7. All in the Family
8. The Simpsons - 9. The Jeffersons
10. Three's Company

Congratulations to Kerry Dawkins who was the first to submit 10 correct answers. Well done Kerry, your prize awaits you in our office.

Quiz for Spring

1. What board game takes it's name from the Latin word meaning 'I play'?
2. What is the capital of Switzerland?
3. What is the name of author Stephen King's wife?
4. What was the name of the exchange student in the John Hughes film 'Sixteen Candles'?
5. If a creature is Odopus, what does it lack?
6. What is the main alcohol ingredient in a mojito cocktail?
7. Where is Espiritu Santo?
8. Aside from drambuie, what is in a Rusty Nail cocktail?
9. Potassium, nitrate, charcoal and sulphur are the traditional ingredients of what?
10. In the Wizard of Oz, what was Dorothy's surname?
11. If you are running from a Sleestack and hanging with Chaka, where are you?
12. A nationwide panic in the U.S. was precipitated by the deaths of seven Chicago-area people who were poisoned by what medication which had been laced with cyanide?

MEETINGS, OUTINGS

Getting out there –

Orokonui Ecosanctuary -
New Zealand Forest Wildlife Experience

A group walk and picnic to this exciting new venture will take place on **Tuesday, 5th October**

Booking is **essential** as lunch will be provided
Phone us here in the office on 4772-598.

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Women's friendship group,
Meets monthly on the first Friday of each month.
Usually from 1.00p.m. - 3.00p.m.

LADIES phone 4772-598 to check the time and the event for the afternoon.

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The following poem was written by the late Michael Wiltshire on 14th September 1991 and is included in his book **Simple pleasures:-**

Frog

Once upon a frog
there came a princess
The rules forbade
him to kiss her
lest he shrivel up
and she did not
deign to touch
him
with her lips
though she thought she caught
the reflection
of a prince
in his eye
Why in matters of the heart
is cupid
such a terribly bad shot.

This book is available in our library should you wish to borrow it and read further.

Acute Wards – a place for recovery?

Recent correspondence to *Enigma* suggests that some mental health workers believe that acute wards are not the place for recovery. The meaning of a “recovery orientated service” is clearly spelled out in the contracts for all government funded services, including acute wards. It means that services must consider:

- Personhood (people must be helped to maintain hope, their individual uniqueness as a person must be respected, they must be given responsibility and the chance to make their own mistakes)
- Basic needs (it must be recognised that a liveable income, decent housing, healthcare and transport are as vital to one’s mental health as any treatment)
- Social connectedness (mutually supportive friends, family, and connections to other human beings are essential)
- Citizenship (having a diagnosis does not mean you cease to be a citizen with all the rights and responsibilities that citizenship entails)
- Empowerment (people whose self-determination is recognised, who are allowed to have power and control over their own lives and who are given meaningful choices, are more likely to recover)
- Best practice (services must foster a culture which is open to new ideas and be willing to challenge the old. Ongoing development of staff and of people using services must be encouraged)

Enigma challenges all mental health workers to transform acute mental health services in which they work by ensuring that recovery becomes a reality rather than tokenism.

Bipolar Education

7th October 2010

from 10.00 a.m. – 3.00p.m.

A free course open to all being held here in our rooms at 109 Princes Street.

This one-day Education course is for any one with an interest in Bipolar Disorder. It is ideal for family members as well as those who have Bipolar to enable a better understanding of the disorder and how it affects those around us.

Part one covers our understanding of what bipolar disorder is, who gets it, symptoms and diagnosis.

Part two, 'You are the Expert', looks at the things that people with a bipolar diagnosis have found to be useful in their recovery. These include lifestyle changes as well as treatments like psychological therapies and medication.

Part three is about the ways that bipolar affects relationships of all kinds, and how planning can help to protect and repair relationships

Phone our office on 4772-598 for further enquiries and to register your interest.

Places are limited and booking is essential

*While you have a mother
treasure her with care,
for you never know her value
till you see her empty chair.*

* * * * *

Treat every stressful situation as a dog would.....
if you can't eat it or play with it, just pee on it and walk away!

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

The first full week in October is Mental Health Awareness Week.

To celebrate good Mental Health we are having the group walk on the Tuesday. Also, in our offices, there will be an Education Course on Bipolar.

The Theme for Mental Health awareness week 2010 is

Flourishing for everyBODY
Feel good & function well

Kia whitianga te raa, ka hihi, ka whakamana, te haa, te hee, kia whai kikokiko, kia puaawai te mauri

When the sun rises, its influence exults all creation, to triumph in the face of challenge, is an offer of one's willingness.

Check the ODT for details about what is on in this area.

Amnesty International takes an interest in mental health

In Ireland Amnesty International is actively involved in mental health issues which they see as a matter of human rights. Amnesty is consulting widely with consumers on the review of the mental health act. Amnesty is also actively lobbying for mental health action from government departments outside health. As Amnesty says: "The right to the highest possible standard of mental health does not just mean effective mental health services. It also means that you must have access to fundamental human rights like employment, housing and education. Not only can access to such rights support your mental health, but they can also act as an aid to recovery for people with mental health problems.