

◆ THE DERBY CITY NSCIA NEWSLETTER ◆

JANUARY 2012

The Derby City Chapter of the National Spinal Cord Injury Association Network- Serving Kentuckiana.

Message From the President

Dear Members & Friends-

THERE WILL NOT BE A MEETING IN JANUARY. February's meeting will be held at Frazier Rehab Institute, 220 Abraham Flexner Way, Louisville, 10th floor dining room.

- David Allgood

This article from NewMobility.com continues from last issue. Some parts in both issues are condensed to save space.

SIDEBARS FROM OVERCOMING DEPRESSION By Richard Holicky

MS, TM AND DEPRESSION

While depression may be a problem for SCI survivors, it's more like an epidemic for those dealing with multiple sclerosis and transverse myelitis. According to Adam Kaplan, principle psychiatric consultant of the MS and TM centers of the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, depression occurs at a rate of 50% in those with MS and ranks as a leading cause of death in those with TM. But there's an upside.

"Depression in this population is not a weakness, but a chemical irritation of the brain. It's very treatable."

Basically any autoimmune insult to the brain results from activation of the immune system gone awry. When present, chronic stress leads to production of cortisol, a steroid that acts as an emergency brake on the immune system. The risk of depression is greatest when the immune system is activated and the brain is under attack because the brain then releases a host of chemicals which causes depression.

"Anti-inflammatory medications seem to have antidepressant qualities when used in combination with commonly prescribed antidepressant medication such as Prozac or Lithium. We've found that treatment for depression stabilizes the immune system as well. The less inflammation in the brain, the lower the depression."

One might surmise that because the depression is chemical in nature, chemical treatment alone would solve the problem. Not so, Kaplan says. "I tell people I can sit here and pop pills down your throat all day and you're not going to get any better. The medications act as a catalyst and synergize with talk therapy, exercise and healthy activity."

Kaplan reports that depression is the number one correlate of quality of life for people with MS, with a larger impact than any physical or cognitive effects. Worse, depression rates run very high for people with TM, explaining why suicide ranks as the number one cause of death in that population at the John Hopkins TM Center.

"People get into a vicious circle. Depression worsens MS because people become less active, are less likely to exercise or eat right, and tend to sleep poorly—all the things which tend to mediate symptoms. Depression adversely affects a person's motivation. Autoimmune mediated depression is much more difficult to treat because of the ongoing brain insult causing inflammation."

Much of Kaplan's work has focused on investigating the biological basis of depression and cognitive impairment in autoimmune CNS diseases such as MS and TM. He has also focused on developing novel treatments for depression that prevent the potential suicidality that has been associated with SSRIs, and that led to their black box warning.

And what are these novel treatment? "Basically it comes down to our having a theory, for which we have experimental support, that SSRIs can actually lead to increased impulsivity associated with suicidality based

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Refrigerator Calendar

2012

JANUARY

**9th
Mon** **Elderly & Disabled Advisory Council Meeting.
1:00; TARC; 1000 W. Broadway; Board Room.**

**16th
Mon** **Derby City Chapter-National Spinal Cord Injury Association; 6:00 p.m.
Frazier Rehab Institute; 220 Abraham Flexner Way, Louisville, KY 40202;
10th floor dining room. NO MEETING IN JANUARY.**

**23rd
Mon** **Metro disAbility Coalition Meeting; 3:15 p.m.
Spalding University; 845 S. Third Street; Louisville .**

FEBRUARY

**6th
Mon** **Elderly & Disabled Advisory Council Meeting.
1:00 p.m.; TARC; 1000 W. Broadway; Board Room.**

**20th
Mon** **Derby City Chapter-National Spinal Cord Injury Association; 6:00 p.m.
Frazier Rehab Institute; 220 Abraham Flexner Way, Louisville, KY 40202;
10th floor dining room.**

**27th
Mon** **Metro disability Coalition Meeting; 3:15 p.m.
Spalding University; 845 S. Third Street; Louisville.**

For More Information Call
David Allgood at 502-588-8574

Derby City Area Chapter
of the
National Spinal Cord Injury Association

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

The Derby City Area Chapter of the N.S.C.I.A. is a membership organization for individuals with spinal cord injuries, their families, and health professionals. Founded in 1984 as a Charter Member of the N.S.C.I.A., it was incorporated under IRS Section 501 (c) 3 as a not for profit organization. The Board of Directors consists of the Officers, Past President and the Board Members At Large.

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www.DerbyCitySpinalCord.org

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Rehab Institute**

OVERCOMING DEPRESSION, CONT'D

in part on their dosing,” Kaplan says. “We are testing in animal models ways of combining other medications with the SSRIs that will make them work more efficiently and rapidly, and without increasing impulsivity. The experiments are underway today, but it will be some time before we have our answer convincingly demonstrated.”

TREATING DEPRESSION ALTERNATIVELY

Some turn to alternative therapies due to the cost of traditional therapy and medications. Many prescribed medications have adverse side effects such as weight gain and sexual dysfunction. Pregnant and nursing women in particular have to be concerned about how medications could affect breastfeeding. Many simply prefer a more natural way of coping with depression.

A 2001 survey estimated that over 30% of Americans, and 60% of those seeking professional treatment, use complimentary and alternative medicinal treatments each year and find them to be comparably effective to traditional therapies. Alternative therapies, either as a stand alone approach or in conjunction with traditional therapies, can help people cope with depression, but there are no guarantees or magic bullets for treating depression. Think of depression as a barometer measuring balance in your life. Alternative therapies combined with professional treatment can help restore that balance. Here is a list of alternative therapies that have been helpful to many:

- **Exercise.** Regular exercise is a powerful counterweight to depression. Consistent physical exercise and activity boosts serotonin and other brain chemical endorphins and also triggers the growth of new brain cells and connections—in much the same manner as antidepressants. Marathon-level training is not necessary in order to experience gains and benefits. Even a half-hour daily routine of stretching and upper body movement can make a big difference. For maximum results, aim for 30-60 minutes of activity on most days. The key is to get moving.
- **Nutrition.** Eating well is important to health, both physical and mental. Eating small, well-balanced meals throughout the day will help maintain energy levels and minimize mood swings. Do your best to avoid the quick fix of sugary foods and try to opt for complex carbohydrates, which will more reliably get you going and avoid the all-too-quick sugar crash.

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OVERCOMING DEPRESSION, CONT'D

- **Sleep.** Sleep strongly affects mood. Depression symptoms tend to worsen when sleep time suffers. Sleep deprivation can exacerbate irritability, moodiness, sadness and fatigue. To ensure getting enough sleep each night, stay active during the day and shoot for seven to nine hours sleep each night.
- **Social Support.** Strong social networks reduce isolation, a key risk factor for depression. Keep in regular contact with friends and family, or consider joining a class or group. Volunteering is a great way to get social support and help others, and it helps boost self-esteem in the process.
- **Stress Reduction.** Work to make the changes necessary in order to manage and reduce stress. Elevated levels of stress can increase depression in the present and the risk of more depression in the future.
- **Music Therapy.** Active techniques can be used to help participants articulate difficult feelings in an improvised dialogue to increase emotional awareness. Receptive techniques involve the use of pre-composed music for relaxation, focus, guided physical muscle relaxation and mood change. Many studies report greater reductions in symptoms of depression.

Other alternative approaches: relaxation techniques, self-help groups, hypnosis, massage, yoga, aromatherapy, spiritual healing and laughter.

TONY NOGUIERA: ARTIST IN MOTION (By Tim Gilmer)

When you visit the artist's website—www.artonio.com—one of the last things you see is evidence of depression. But it is there in a few works, mixed in with more typical vibrant creations, whether they represent an underwater world, the world of the subconscious mind, or a mysterious world pulsing with color, form and symbol. His works are alive and full of energy, unlike the state of clinical depression that Richard Holicky's cover story describes. Those few works of Tony Noguiera's that suggest a subdued mood are easy to pick out because they incur so infrequently.

And that's the way depression affects our lives as well. When it hits, it hits with devastating, unforgettable force, but usually in a matter of weeks or a few months, it is gone, unlikely to return until years have passed, or never again.

"I don't think I've ever experienced clinical depression," Noguiera says. "The closest I came to it was being angry with myself for letting my accident happen."

Noguiera fell from a tree while hanging from his legs at the age of 19. The life he has lived since then—he is now 43, a complete para—has had no shortage of the daily frustrations we all face, but his approach has never been to

sulk or complain. He is married to Kim Janeck and has two boys, ages 10 and 12.

He paints with passion. "I am not good with words, he says. Maybe that's why I turn to art to express myself. Not only does he work fast, he moves fast—he's a professional wheelchair racer who trains six days a week, often wheeling 10-30 miles. He likes to work with very large canvases, most of them larger than himself. He's a graduate of Montclair University with a major in art education, and he teaches art to elementary school kids at the Cordero School PS 37 in Jersey City.

"Twice a year I create a huge work of art for my school that takes up an entire stage. I don't know how I do it from my wheelchair, I just do it. The last one I did was a representation of the Ice Age. I'm in constant motion, putting things together, painting, creating. I don't think that much about it. I just immerse myself in the work until it's done." Somehow he finds time to coach soccer, as well.

Noguiera's lifestyle sounds like a prescription for avoiding, or perhaps even overcoming, depression: Stay busy, involved with family, community, and the lives of others, active physically and emotionally, enjoying life.

WHEN DEPRESSION HITS YEARS LATER (By Richard Holicky)

Sometimes the onset of depression is delayed. Sam Gardner hid his true feelings following his injury in a violent crash in which his friend was killed.

"I spent those years drinking and drugging, trying to medicate away the pain and guilt I felt for surviving a trip I had talked him into taking. I had always believed that things eventually turn out OK, but over that five years my hope simply evaporated, and the drugs and booze would no longer take away the pain. Then I lost the girlfriend I'd had since before I was injured and everything totally unraveled: my self-identity crumbled, I got sick, I went through a weird drug experience that slammed me to the ground, and I simply lost hope."

Gardner spent about six months in the ditch of depression that Craig Hospital psychologist Lester Butt defines as helplessness, hopelessness and worthlessness before realizing he either had to move on or do himself in, which he dismissed "out of pure fear."

I felt like I was in a deep pit with no escape. Something physiological happened when I took that dive. I experienced in a palpable way that feeling of being without energy that others describe, and it was like nothing I've ever experienced before. I was almost catatonic at one time."

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OVERCOMING DEPRESSION, CONT'D

When his family made plans to have him committed, Gardner, terrified, looked up the shrink he saw in rehab and underwent counseling, but looking back he's unsure of the effectiveness of the sessions. "I saw the guy just three times, cried a lot, said very little and made the decision that seeing him more wouldn't help. I took the pills he prescribed for a couple of weeks, didn't feel any different, so I quit. I was used to taking drugs and getting an instant 'rush.' These did nothing for me. Had I not been feeling so hopeless I might have given them more time.

Garner's physical symptoms—weight loss, fatigue, loss of energy, psychomotor retardation (slowing of thought and reduction of physical movement) - are classic symptoms of depression and can serve as markers for SCI survivors who are clear of rehab and have been out in the community for a year or two or longer. His "plunge into the pit" is not all that uncommon, either and often quite common for those who experience some return of function or go through a law suit. Both these experiences often furnish the same effect alcohol and drugs did for Gardner—serving as a distraction from the reality of dealing with paralysis and life on wheels.

Functional return allows the belief that "everything is going to be OK, while pursuing a lawsuit feeds the belief that a pot of gold at the end will buy off much of the pain. But when the physical return stops or the money runs out, the individual is still on wheels, still doing bowel programs and looking for accessible parking spots. Reaching that plateau can slam people into a wall of reality they had avoided up to that point.

Likewise, habitual substance use/abuse usually provides predictable—though illusory—relief from emotional pain and turmoil. Loss of that "friend" can precipitate both physical and emotional symptoms—lethargy and emotional paralysis being high on the list.

It took Gardner six months to recover from what he now considers a "drug-induced depressive state" complicated by denial of his true feelings.



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FOR SALE ***

***Fully accessible house.** Near Iroquois Park; built in 2000; 1500 sq ft + attached car & 1/2 garage; 3 BR, 2 full baths; large master BR has spacious walk-in closet; large bathroom off master BR has roll-in shower; kitchen & living room have cathedral ceilings with recessed lighting; laminate wood flooring in all rooms except one; gas fireplace; bay window overlooks 30 x 12 ft deck & large private wooded back yard; Pella windows with dust free blinds inside the window panes; 3 accessible entrances—1 with automatic door opener & remote control; home has 4 ft wide hallway & 3 ft wide doorways. Call David @ 502-550-4272.

***Shopperider Power Wheelchair.** Streamer Sport Model; \$900. Call 502-724-9942 or 502-426-6100.

***If assistance is needed to pay for any items **ABOVE** (except the house) in *For Sale* contact KY Assistive Technology Loan Corporation at 1-800-327-5287 for information on 5% interest loans to qualified individuals.

***Cookbooks for Sale:** Recipes compiled by Chapter members; \$10:00. Call David @ 588-8574.

***Video tapes for sale.** Various topics related to spinal cord injuries. Call David Allgood at 588-8574.

♦ **SCI -Shirts for sale.** S, M, L, XL. David—588-8574.

***IF YOU HAVE ITEMS FOR SALE,
PLEASE EMAIL BARB DAVIS AT
davis.barbara33@gmail.com***



You are cordially invited to join us!

The Derby City Chapter of the National Spinal Cord Injury Association consists of people with spinal cord injuries and similar physical conditions, their family members, friends, and professionals or other interested parties.

We meet:

WHEN- Third Monday of every month from 6:30 to 9:00 PM

*WHERE- Frazier Rehab Institute, 10th floor Dining Room
220 Abraham Flexner Way, Louisville, KY 40202*

If you wish to be a member, donor, and/or be on the mailing list of the Derby City Chapter of the National Spinal Cord Injury Association please complete and mail the following form to the address below

National Spinal Cord Injury Association

Derby City Chapter

Membership & Organization Sponsorship Form

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Membership is open to all individuals and sponsorship to all organizations interested in spinal cord injury.

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