



Life Transitions Newsletter

June 2008



Dear Clients,

This issue focuses on two main topics: depression and S.T.D.s.

As many of you know, depression is a vast topic which is often covered in these newsletter. For this issue, we focus on possible future vaccines to prevent depression, how malfunctioning thyroid causes depression and the effectiveness of antidepressants.

A recent study on Teen S.T.D.s has been published. The results indicate that far more teens have S.T.D.s than previously thought. Read on for more information and needed actions to reverse this increasing trend.

June marks the beginning of summer. Don't forget to take time for yourself to relax and regenerate!

Sincerely,

Penny Blazej, LCSW, BCD

A Vaccine for Depression?

Recently researchers at Royal Marsden Hospital in Sutton, England may have discovered a vaccine that could prevent depression. Dr. O'Brien was researching if a common vaccine (mycobacterium vaccae) used to treat tuberculosis, Crohn's disease, and other conditions could be used with lung cancer patients to improve their survival rates. Though the studies showed no improvement in survival rates, Dr. O'Brien observed that the patients treated with the vaccine reported significantly higher scores in cognitive functioning, vitality, emotional health and other quality-of-life measures. Could this vaccine affect serotonin levels? Dr Lowry of the University of Colorado decided to do further studies, this time on mice. He discovered that the vaccine affects Type II serotonin which is thought to be involved in activating the body's stress-coping system. Much more research needs to be done but these research projects certainly have opened up a new area for depression research.

Can a Malfunctioning Thyroid cause Depression?

Yes! The thyroid gland regulates several hormones and neurotransmitters that can directly cause depression. This type of depression is termed organic form. Many of you have asked why I recommend getting a full physical before considering antidepressants. The reason is to rule out possible organic causes for your depression. If you have hypothyroidism or hyperparathyroidism giving you an antidepressant is like giving you an umbrella in a hurricane! In these cases, antidepressants are not the answer – what is needed is medicine to treat your thyroid disorder. In many cases, once the thyroid is treated the depression goes away.



Life Transitions Newsletter

June 2008

An excellent thyroid educational resource is Dr. Mark Hyman's website www.thyroid.ultrawellness.com. He gives an excellent 30 minutes on-line video on thyroid and treatments. The cost is \$19.95 which includes books, video and much more. His organization can be reached by calling 800-839-9244. You can also go to www.functionalmedicine.org for more information.

Are Antidepressants Really Effective?

Some of you may have read a recent study, Jan. 17, 2008 in the *New England Journal of Medicine* which stated that many of the antidepressant articles that gave negative results were not published. When all the studies, not just the positive ones, were considered the effectiveness of antidepressants was significantly less. It is important to note, these types of mega studies (when several different research studies are lumped together) can give very misleading results. Each study has its own design, different hypothesis, number of participants varies and many other variables that leads to unreliable results.

In addition, depression is very individualized with each person having different symptoms. Also, each antidepressant works in different ways, effectiveness is difficult to measure.

Given all these variables, the conclusions that this article makes, mainly antidepressants are less effective than once thought, are invalid.

This study should not be a cause for alarm or spur any major shifts in treatment. Rather, it serves as a reminder for us to appreciate the limits of our knowledge, to tailor treatment to individual needs and – if you find it – stick with what works.

Should You Worry About Your Teen and S.T.D.'s?

Most certainly yes! A recent large study showed that one in four female teens has a Sexually Transmitted Diseases (S.T.D.). The Center for Disease Control estimates that 3.2 million teenage females in the United States are infected.

The above conclusions came from recent research where four common S.T.D.'s were studied: human papillomavirus (HPV), chlamydia, genital herpes and trichomoniasis (a common parasite) in teenagers 14-19. HPV was the most common at 18%.

The scary thing is that most are unaware that they are infected. However, these S.T.D.'s can lead to irritating vaginal discharge, painful pelvic inflammatory disease and potentially fatal ectopic pregnancy. These infections could lead to infertility and cervical cancer.

So what can you do? If you are a parent or teacher, comprehensive sexual education is a must. If you are a teen who has decided to be sexually active, you need to take the responsibility of getting yourself regularly tested and if need be, treated for S.T.D.'s, be selective who your sexual partner is, not have multiple partners and use condoms for some protection (note that condoms do not protect against all S.T.D.'s).

Resources

Dr. Janet P. Realini, MD, M.P.H. has announced a *NEW* 2008 version of BIG DECISIONS™. It is available FREE at www.BIGDECISIONS.org.

BIG DECISIONS™ is an "Abstinence-Plus" Sexuality Curriculum, suitable for 7th to 12th grades. BIG DECISIONS™ has 10 active-learning lessons that support abstinence, but that also give young people the basic information they need to protect themselves if they become



Life Transitions Newsletter

June 2008

sexually active. Below are just a few topics that are covered:

- 1) Goals and Dreams--and how a pregnancy or an STD might interfere with them
- 2) Positive influences of a young person's culture
- 3) Anatomy illustrations: Male Inside and Female Inside
- 4) ANATOMY and KEY MESSAGES posters are now PowerPoint files, downloadable from the website
- 5) Exercise in the PARENT SESSION for parents to practice talking to their kids about sex

Announcements

The musical office game has finally ended. The new Valley Center office is up and running. The Escondido office has moved right next door (same suite) into a larger space to accommodate family therapy. Thank you for your patience and understanding during these moves. It is nice to be settled in!

Book Reviews

“When Your Child Is Cutting – A Parent’s Guide to Helping Children Overcome Self-Injury” by Dr. Merry E. McVey-Noble. This book is well organized and easy to read. I found it to be a good review on how to address your child’s self-injury behavior. The authors give you an in-depth understanding of the possible reasons for cutting, how to talk to your child about their behavior, how to select a competent psychotherapist and what to expect from treatment.

“The Underground Guide to Teenage Sexuality” by Michael J. Basso. 2nd Edition. This is a great

book for pre-teens and teens to read. It is an easy read with good diagrams. There is an outstanding section on how to say no to sex. I highly recommend it!

You can order these books by going to www.amazon.com or you can borrow them from my library.

Wise Words

“People who trade freedom for security desire neither.” Ben Franklin