



# Lamont Health Care Centre

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P.O. Box 479, 5216-53 Street, Lamont, Alberta T0B



## 2013 COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER – SUMMER EDITION

### ‘MEDICAL CORNER’

#### DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

by Dr. Zainool Mohamed, Chief of Medical Staff - LHCC

I would like to discuss anxiety and depression which is very prevalent in our community. Usually these are topics that seemed to be reserved for the colder, darker days of winter but I feel that these two diagnoses affect people year around.

Anxiety itself is actually a protective mechanism to deal with day-to-day stress. The disease is actually called an anxiety disorder. This occurs when a person has excessive anxiety or worries about several events or activities most of the days of the week. Also involved here is difficulty in controlling these feelings and this affects your day-to-day life. It also affects your social interactions. There are different types of anxieties including post traumatic stress disorder and panic disorder but they are still within the anxiety disorder list.

Depression is not merely a feeling of sadness. This occurs at any time to almost anybody. This is specifically in a situation where there is persistent feelings of sadness or unhappiness, an inability or frustration over small matters, a loss of interest in normal activities or pleasure in normal activities, reduced sex drive, insomnia, changes in appetite, agitation or restlessness like pacing, irritability or angry outbursts, slow thinking or decreased concentration, indecisiveness, fatigue, loss of energy, feeling of worthlessness or guilt even if it is undeserved guilt over things you might have done differently, memory problems, frequent thoughts of death, dying or suicide, crying spells for no apparent reasons and unexplained physical disorders like chronic back pain, neck pain or temporomandibular joint dysfunction; something that cannot be easily seen.

So, the above indicate how we come to a diagnosis of depression. Some people consider that those feelings must exist for a certain time period or that they must have a triggering life event in order to qualify as depression or anxiety that are medical disorders; however, I feel that if people have these feelings which are interfering with their day-to-day living, this in itself justifies making a diagnosis of depression. This does not mean that a person requires long term treatment but they do require some kind of intervention.

The first intervention that needs to be taken is to actually discuss your feelings with your family doctor. This is the start of the therapeutic relationship; at the same time it allows you to reaffirm whether you have a true disorder or if it is merely just life's stress which is a natural part of living. Remember taking medication in order to cure disease is not the answer in all cases. Often the doctor will suggest counseling in order to get to the bottom of the feelings of anxiety and depression and this is an essential part of the treatment. An understanding of the disease and being able to think properly about the disease is half of the treatment; it's an ongoing part of the health of the patient.

Medication is essential for a long term feeling of depression or anxiety. The reason for this is we know from brain studies that a change occurs in a person's brain when they have a long standing depression or anxiety and that needs to be reversed chemically. There is a chemical imbalance in the brain that has been proven and the only way to reverse this balance is to use medication to accomplish this. Counseling will maintain the reversal of this balance. So, this means that once the medication has had an effect, counseling allows the person to continue having good mental health.

People often ask me about discontinuing medication once it is started. Depression is a discreet disease that can have a sudden time limit with regards to treatment especially if the incident that caused the depression in the first place is addressed. Usually treatment should occur for about two years or maybe four times as long as the person was depressed.

#### **Mission Statement**

We believe that wholeness of body, mind and spirit is God's will for every person.

We are committed to the healing process, the promotion of health

and the provision of compassionate care to all persons.



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#### **DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY -continued**

Anxiety on the other hand is something that occurs on a day-to-day basis and has multiple factors that cause it. Anxiety can be controlled but more often than not anxiety has to be treated for the rest of the patient's life with the lowest dose of medication possible. At some stage a person may feel that their anxiety is under control without the need for medication and that counseling in itself is acceptable. I cannot argue with this as a person may be well on their road to recovery. However, because anxiety is so insidious, relapses are common and it is important to recognize that a person may need the medication again maybe in spurts, every two to three years. There is nothing to be ashamed of since everybody has anxiety to the point that if it interferes with daily life which needs to be addressed in a medical manner.

I hope that this has given you some insight into two very complex diseases; I feel it essential that if you think this applies to you that you seek consultation with your family doctor.

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