



**Pharmacology
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Institute**

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What is “Medical” about Depression - Isn’t everyone depressed sometimes?

By: Robert D. Linden, M.D.

While we all know what it is like to feel sad, blue, or down, only about 10 to 15% of people will experience the type of medical Depression that we have been studying at PRI for the past 26 years. A key element is that there has been a loss of the resilience and “changeability” of mood that people normally have. Usually, if a friend or neighbor says that they are feeling depressed, chances are that the next time we see them they probably are feeling different. We tend not to stay in one mood very long, and we might feel very differently on Monday morning as compared to Saturday. In a medical Depression (AKA Clinical Depression or Major Depression), however, someone wakes up feeling the same way, day in and day out - like Bill Murray’s character in the movie “Groundhog’s Day.”

People who are depressed will also feel despondent, low on energy or anxious and “edgy”. In its most severe form, depression can cause people to lose all hope and desire to live. There are additional symptoms that help us diagnose Major Depression. Often there is a change in someone’s normal sleep pattern. In a Depression, many people have trouble falling asleep. They also

might have “early morning insomnia,” that is, waking up at 1 or 2 AM, and have difficulty falling back to sleep. However, some people with Depression can have prolonged sleeping, with difficulty waking up and getting started in the mornings, or have otherwise interrupted sleep.

In a Depression, people often have fatigue or low energy. They can lose interest in things, and not take the same pleasure in activities that they had in the past. They may also notice a change in appetite, with either weight loss or gain. Other frequent symptoms include social withdrawal and not wanting to be among people or being more “thin-skinned” and irritable.

There can be cognitive changes as well, with difficulty concentrating or focusing, or difficulties making decisions. At times, memory can become impaired during a Depression, and can return to normal as the Depression is treated.

It is the presence and duration of several of these symptoms which help us make a diagnosis of a medical Depression. During the course of a study at PRI, we will follow these symptoms, in order to assess the effectiveness of the treatment. While we recently have seen many new and effective



treatments for Depression, there is still much work to be done. Depression is a serious condition, that needs to be carefully evaluated like any other illness. At PRI we have been fortunate to participate in many of the advances in the treatment of Depression over the past years, and continue to evaluate new approaches to this common and disabling illness.

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PRI Newport Beach Moves to a New, Larger Location!

By: Charles S. Wilcox, Ph.D.

Over the *Cinco de Mayo* weekend our Newport Beach team moved six blocks to the north and is now located at 1601 Dove Street. While still close to the Orange County Airport, our new office is now within walking distance to numerous shops and restaurants, as well as several other types of services. In addition to being larger and even better-suited for our research activities, our new office provides a very pleasant environment for visitors, including a center courtyard area with a large fountain and reflecting pool. Perhaps most importantly, there is an abundance of free, easily accessible parking!

Interestingly, we are now



1601 Dove Street, Suite #290

relocated back to within three blocks of where we conducted our first studies in 1975. Our new mailing address is 1601 Dove Street, Suite #290, Newport Beach, CA 92660-2452. Fortunately, our contact information remains unchanged; you may still contact us by telephone at 949.752.7910. However, we are *really* looking forward to seeing you in person, the next time you visit us at our *new*-Newport Beach location!

Thanks for Joining the Team, My-Linh

By: Alicia A. Puppione, R.N., M.S.N.



My-Linh Tong, R.N., M.S.N., N.P.

In our continuing series about our talented team members, we spotlight My-Linh Tong, one of our research nurses. My-Linh is a member of our Los Alamitos team and we feel lucky that she is.

My-Linh brings to PRI almost

ten years of nursing experience in a diverse number of fields. She graduated from California State University, Long Beach with her bachelor of science in nursing - with honors! Upon graduation she worked as a nurse in local hospitals before returning to pursue a Master's degree. My-Linh graduated - with honors again - from California State University, Long Beach with expertise in both public health and the primary care of families.

My-Linh likes working at PRI because her position here allows her to really "get to know" her patients and requires that she follow the same patients throughout their participation in the

research studies. My-Linh finds it interesting to work at PRI because she gets a "sneak preview" of the treatments that are not yet available in the United States. Because she enjoys working with people of all ages, from teens to older adults, she appreciates the diverse patient population we have at PRI.

When My-Linh is not working at PRI, she works at an internal medicine office associated with the University of California at Irvine. Additionally, she volunteers regularly at a local clinic for Vietnamese immigrants. When she can squeeze them into her busy schedule My-Linh enjoys arts and crafts, sewing and spending time with her family.

When Does Normal Memory Loss Become Abnormal?

By Oscar Pakier, M.D.

As we get older, and notice more frequent memory lapses, there is an increasing concern that we may be developing dementia. Dementia is a general term for an illness where there is a profound, progressive loss of memory, and a decline in one's ability to function independently. Dementia is not a part of normal aging, but it is a disease that affects older people.

There is a normal loss of memory as we age that is not considered an illness. This usually involves a decreased ability to learn new information or solve problems. There is also a gradual loss in processing and remembering spoken and visual information. This accounts for trouble recalling names or forgetting where we put things. This may be why older folks have trouble learning new skills like computer skills. Complaints of memory loss should not be entirely

ignored. A recent study indicated that about 20% of those complaining of memory loss to their doctors did eventually develop dementia.

There are multiple causes for dementia. Alzheimer's Disease, a progressive degeneration of brain tissue, is the most common cause. Other conditions which may increase the risk of dementia include small strokes, diabetes and high blood pressure. Parkinson's Disease is often associated with dementia.

A thorough medical evaluation is necessary with memory loss because some causes are highly treatable. Depression in the older adults commonly causes significant concentration problems often mistaken for dementia. Other treatable causes of memory loss include: thyroid disease, Vitamin B12 deficiency, and a disease that causes an increased pressure in the brain, called normal

pressure hydrocephalus.

Specific treatments for Alzheimer's Disease are now limited to drugs that increase a brain neurotransmitter, acetylcholine. Unfortunately, these medications only delay the progression of the illness. Current research is studying the biochemical steps of how Alzheimer's Disease develops. Scientists are looking for answers on how to slow this process; however, a real cure seems years away. We now work with those affected to increase quality and enjoyment of life. This illness often causes the greatest stress on the caregivers. Many groups, like the Alzheimer's Association provide information about dementia and support groups for patients and their families. For more information regarding support groups or new treatments, please contact your local PRI office.

Easy Ways to "Exercise" and Protect Your Brain

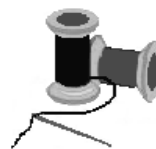
Exercise to increase blood flow to your brain

- * walking
- * swimming
- * gardening
- * yoga
- * dancing
- * bowling
- * Tai-Chi



Stay mentally active to keep your neurons (AKA brain cells) connected

- * reading
- * puzzles
- * games
- * writing
- * singing
- * sewing
- * classes at a junior college or center
- * surfing the Internet



See your doctor about vitamins or medications that may help - ask about:

- * Vitamin E
- * Ginkgo
- * Estrogen replacement (women only)
- * anti-inflammatory medications
- * baby aspirin



What's New at PRI?

Are You or Someone You Know Depressed???

Are you feeling hopeless, fatigued, down and blue? Let us try to help! PRI is working on a number of new and interesting studies for people that have depression. Whether this is your first time suffering from depression, or your most recent episode of chronic depression, PRI probably has a study for you. If you think you or someone you know might be suffering from depression, please call us for more information.

Do you have Migraine Headaches?

Migraine headaches are responsible for thousands of hours of pain and suffering each year and cause many hours of lost productivity. Migraines tend to be located on one side of the head, cause pain that is described as pulsating or throbbing, and are worsened by light, sound and/or movement. If you have 2 to 8 migraines per month, you may be eligible for our new migraine study which is enrolling in all four offices. We are also enrolling teens,

12 to 17, in a migraine study in our Northridge office.

Memory Loss?

Do you or does someone you know have trouble remembering things? Is this problem slowing getting worse? Slow progressive memory loss is sometimes treatable and PRI is working on some exciting new studies for people that have memory problems.

For more information on PRI's programs for Depression, Migraine Headaches, or Memory Loss, please call the nearest office.

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