

Depressive mental illness

This leaflet explains...

The possible implications for children of their birth parents' depressive mental illness and the implications for carers.

Securing families for Suffolk children



SUFFOLK ADOPTION AGENCY

Manic Depression

This mental illness shows as a mood disturbance. It may be apparent either as a mania or depression, or a swing between both symptoms (then called a Bi Polar illness). (The range of severity varies from mild to severe). Diagnosis should be made by a psychiatrist for accurate classification. If it is very severe it is called a psychosis.

Causes

Brain disorders, certain drugs affecting mood and an inherited tendency (similar risk to Schizophrenia). At least one defective gene has been identified, but other factors also come into play before the illness is clinically apparent. Mood changes are linked to levels of biochemical substances, dopamine in the brain and serotonin.

Occurrence

1 in 10 men and 1 in 5 women have depression sometime in their lifetime. About one third of these are severe.

The manic part of the illness is rare and affects men and women in equal incidents of about 0.8% (8 per 1000)

If 1 birth parent has bi polar manic depression the risk to any offspring of it occurring is 15%.

If 2 birth parents have bi polar manic depression the risk to any offspring of it occurring is 50% (A higher risk than schizophrenia).

If 1 parent had manic depression and another schizophrenia, the risk to any offspring is 17% for each illness occurring because the diagnoses overlap.

Treatment

- Hospital admission for severe illness
- Depression treated by drugs and / or ECT
- Mania treated by drugs

- Lithium used in remission to prevent relapse
- Group therapy or individual psychotherapy, cognitive/ behavioural therapy

Outlook

Over 80% recover after the acute phase.

Repeated severe episodes, or severe depression may lead to suicide or poverty, social isolation and alcohol dependence.

Borderline disorders are commoner in first degree relatives and in biological relatives, than occur within the general population.

There is an increased risk of substance use related disorder, antisocial personality and mood disorder in relatives of sufferers that in the general population.

Environment and circumstances are also factors influencing the appearance of these illnesses.

Source: 1995 Dr Reveley ,Psychiatrist at the Maudsley Hospital – BAAF seminar on schizophrenia and other affective disorders.

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