All meetings are held on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} Wednesday of the month from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. in Room 413 (A & B) at Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic (WPIC). For more information contact Joan Buttenfield, RN, BSN at 412-246-5588.

Free Parking is available in the WPIC J - lot, upper level only, on DeSoto Street. There is also parking in the lot on O’Hara Street (next door to WPIC) at a nominal cost.

*Hope, like the gleaming taper’s light, Adorns and cheers our way; And still, as darker grows the night, Emits a brighter ray.* ~ Oliver Goldsmith

*Don’t fight your problem. Know that there is a solution.* ~ Joseph Murphy

**If at any time you wish to subscribe or be removed from the mailing list, please call 412-246-5544.**
NAMI SW PA is the regional affiliate of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill. According to Harriet Baum, Executive Director, “We would like every family member who has a loved one with a mental illness to be made aware of NAMI.” NAMI coordinates education programs, such as Family-to-Family for families of adults and Hand-to-Hand for parents of children and adolescents with serious mental illnesses or behavioral disorders. NAMI SW PA provides peer-led support groups for family members in the southwestern PA region in addition to community educations and political advocacy on behalf of people affected by mental illness. For more information, call 412-366-3788 or visit www.namiswpa.org.

The NAMI SW PA Sixth Annual Regional Conference will be held April 22, 2006 at the Wyndham Pittsburgh Airport Hotel. The primary focus of this year’s conference will be recovery and best practices. For more information visit the NAMI website listed above.

Women’s Behavioral Health CARE of WPIC is dedicated to conducting research that provides insight into illnesses that affect women of childbearing age. Seeking to advance both clinical care and education of health care professionals through advances in research, Katherine L. Wisner, M.C., M.S. and her staff are gathering information of the effects of antidepressants for depression taken during pregnancy on child development, the effectiveness of therapies for depression before and after pregnancy, and the efficacy of new treatments for bipolar illness. This information will be used to guide physicians, health professionals, and women of childbearing age in the risk-benefit decision-making process associated with mood disorders. Women’s Behavioral HealthCARE collaborates with the Magee Women’s Research Institute as well as Magee Behavioral Health Clinic. For more information, visit www.womensbehavioralhealth.org.

The following is a current list of research studies underway or starting soon. Space limitations prohibit complete descriptions but the contact person(s) at the numbers listed will be able to fully describe and discuss their particular study with you. All calls are confidential.

Mothers ~ Do You Feel Overwhelmed?

UPMC is conducting a research program to learn more about the struggles faced by mothers caring for children with emotional difficulties. You may be eligible if you:
-- feel depressed, stressed, irritable, or overwhelmed;
-- are the mother of a child who is being seen at the Services for Teens at Risk (STAR) Clinic or the Center for Children and Families (CCF);
-- are not currently receiving individual or family counseling. Participants will receive depression screening and nine sessions of experimental talk therapy at no cost. For more details or to find out if you qualify, please call Dana Fleming at (412) 246-5566.

Medication Treatment Program: Depression and Anxiety in Adults

The Depression Prevention Program of Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic is currently recruiting volunteers to examine the effectiveness of sertraline (Zoloft) medication for major depression. The
participants will be seen weekly for approximately 12 weeks. All psychological assessments and medication will be provided at no cost. To qualify you must be between the ages of 18 and 60, have symptoms of both depression and anxiety, and must be either antidepressant-free or taking an antidepressant that is not helping. If you are interested and you meet these qualifications, please email Traci Salopek at (salopektm@upmc.edu) or call 412-246-5566.

**Depression in Adults**
The UPMC Depression Prevention Program is conducting a study for people 18 and older who suffer from depression. This study will explore the features of a depressed person's mood, personality, and genetic makeup and how these features may affect a person's response to either medication or therapy. The study will provide approximately 38 to 58 weeks of interpersonal psychotherapy and/or FDA-approved antidepressant medication. Medication, interpersonal psychotherapy and study assessments are provided at no cost. The study contact is Joan Buttenfield, BSN and she can be reached by email at buttenfieldja@upmc.edu or phone at 412-246-5566.

**Research Study Volunteer Program (RSVP) for Mental Health**
If you are age 18 or older, please sign up for the research study volunteer program (RSVP) and be connected with medical researchers conducting exciting studies at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic. For more information about our research registry, call Mary at 412-246-5566.

**Healthy Lifestyles: Improving and Maintaining the Quality of Your Life**
The National Depressive and Manic-Depressive Association has this helpful tip to aid in dealing with everyday stress:

*Relaxation* – experiment with different relaxation methods until you find the one that’s right for you. Some of these methods include:

- walking
- listening to music
- light exercise such as dancing or bicycling
- meditation or yoga
- deep breathing exercises

For more information on these and other tips, please visit the National DMDA website at [www.ndmda.org](http://www.ndmda.org). The mission of the National DMDA is to educate patients, families, professionals, and the public concerning the nature of depressive and manic-depressive illnesses as treatable medical diseases; to foster self-help for patients and families; to eliminate discrimination and stigma; to improve access to care and to advocate for research toward the elimination of these illnesses.

**Resources**
The following are websites that may provide helpful information for you and/or the families of people suffering with bipolar disorder or depression:

**Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA):** [www.DBSAlliance.org](http://www.DBSAlliance.org).
The DBSA is patient-directed, illness specific, non-profit organization. Free educational materials on depression, bipolar...
disorder, and related mood disorders, are available via the website.

**National Mental Health Association (NMHA):** [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org). The NMHA is also a non-profit organization and it addresses bipolar disorder, depression, alcohol and drug abuse, and other types of mental disorders.

**National Institute for Mental Health (NIHM):** [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov). NIH is a federal agency that is a part of the National Institute of Health. It covers a wide variety of health information, and sponsors many research activities aimed at improving mental health.

**Bipolar (Manic-Depressive) Disorder**
[www.psycom.net/depression.central.bipolar.html](http://www.psycom.net/depression.central.bipolar.html)
This site contains a great deal of information about bipolar (manic-depressive) disorder.

The NEDA is a not-for-profit organization that is working to educate the public about eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, and others concerned with body image and weight issues.

**Depression.com**
[http://www.depression.com](http://www.depression.com)
Check out their Look, Listen & Learn presentations. These presentations are actually mini-videos of various subjects such as how depression affects the brain, and what patients have to say about depression and how it has affected them. This site is very user-friendly.

**Northwest Regional Council Caregiver Support**
This URL provides informative caregiver support for those who are taking care of someone who is depressed and for those who would like more information on a family member or friend who suffers from depression. The caregiver kit is produced by the Northwest Regional Council/Area Agency on Aging but the information given applies to all who may suffer from depression.

**Real Men/ Real Depression**
This website spotlights men and depression. Not all men are aware that they have symptoms of depression and the illness may go untreated. Read through various stories provided by men who have experienced depression and what signs to look out for.

**Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General**
Provides information on what the U.S. government is doing to address issues of mental health care for the nation in general. The report is produced by the collaborative efforts of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

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**Helpful phone numbers:**

**24 - Hour Crises Hotline** for Allegheny County Emergency Services (ACES):
1-888-424-2287
Having trouble getting the message across to your healthcare provider?

Learn what you can do to help improve communication. Below is an article written by Dr. Ellen Frank for the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) Outreach newsletter, Spring 2005. DBSA: www.DBSAlliance.org Dr. Frank is Chair of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance's Scientific Advisory Board and the Director of the Depression Prevention Program at WPIC:

Scientific Advisory Board Update
Elements of Good Communication

In a previous column, I wrote about the basics of a good therapeutic alliance: education about illnesses and treatments and working toward wellness through positive lifestyle changes. A good therapeutic alliance is not possible without good communication. The most productive communication happens when you and your health care provider(s) work together and communicate openly to help you achieve the greatest level of wellness possible.

Since mood disorders affect a person's perception, you may face more communication challenges than individuals with other illnesses. Depression may make you think you don't deserve to feel better. Mania or depression can get in the way of your being able to interpret your clinician's efforts as being in your best interest. It may be difficult to work on improving communication at first, especially if your symptoms are severe. But keep working on it -- the results are worth it.

What can you do to help your health care providers improve communication?

• Discuss your full range of symptoms (mental and physical), life events, behaviors and anything that affects your wellness. Your provider should ask you direct questions such as, "Have you been having trouble sleeping?" or "Have you had thoughts of death or suicide"? If your provider asks more general questions, such as "How are you?" bring your own list of symptoms and issues to your appointment.

• Be sure your providers know your treatment needs and preferences. Recognize that you know more than anyone about your own mind, body and life. Providers should make an effort to understand the way you see the world and be sensitive to your cultural background. This includes giving you the opportunity to use your spiritual beliefs in your treatment.
• Ask your providers to talk to you in a language you can understand. Write down or repeat back anything that is complicated. If your providers are using medical terms you don’t understand, don’t be afraid to ask them for more explanation in simpler terms.

• Learn everything you can about your illness and its treatments so you can make informed decisions. Ask your providers for written information on your illness, along with a number you can call if you need help between appointments.

• Find a provider who gives you hope. Good mental health care focuses on the things you and your provider can do to improve your condition. A good health care provider will not act as if your situation is hopeless, tell you you’re not going to get better, or say there’s nothing else he or she can do to help you, unless he or she also sends you to see someone else with more experience treating your illness. A good health care provider reminds you that your illness is real, treatable, and not your fault.

• Find out what you can expect from your treatment, both positive (such as increased energy) and negative (such as side effects).

• Ask your providers to accept input and feedback from your loved ones if you think this would help your treatment.

It is normal to be worried about bringing up symptoms or concerns to your health providers. It is understandable that you might be nervous about looking for a second opinion. But you have a right to the best treatment possible. The more strongly you advocate for good treatment, the better chance you have of achieving the wellness you deserve.

The UPMC Depression and Prevention Program in collaboration with the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh sponsor the **Mental Health and Wellness Lecture Series.** These sessions are held at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh in Oakland in the first floor quiet reading room from 6 to 8 p.m. All sessions are free of charge and light refreshments are provided. The following programs are upcoming:

**Wednesday, January 11:**
**POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION: UNDERSTANDING MOOD CHANGES AFTER THE BIRTH OF YOUR BABY.**
Presented by Katherine L. Wisner, M.D., M.S. Dr. Wisner is the Director of Women’s Behavioral HealthCARE. This lecture deals with how to recognize postpartum depression and what steps you can take to get treatment.

**Wednesday, February 1:**
**A HEALTHY HEART IS A HAPPY HEART: DEPRESSION AND WELLNESS.** This session is presented by Ellen Frank, Ph.D., Director of the Depression Prevention Program and Joyce Bromberg, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Epidemiology and Psychiatry. Our mental health has an impact on our heart health. This lecture explains how and what can be done to keep your heart and mind healthy.

**Recommended Reading**

*Feeling Good – The New Mood Therapy* by David Burns, M.D. This book had initially been released over 20 years ago and its advice is still valuable today. The latest paperback version was released in 1999. The author presents a cognitive
approach to dealing with depression and focuses on thought processes and reactions to everyday events, and aims to reduce negative thinking through rationalization. A depression “self-test” is also included in the book.

Some self-help tips for dealing with depression:

- keep a journal ~ sometimes just writing it down on paper can help put things in their proper perspective
- exercise ~ even if it is just to take a walk
- call someone ~ if you have family or friends that are supportive, give them a call
- do something for someone else, often times this takes the focus off of you
- find a support/self-help group
- go online to see what other resources are available, for instance just enter the word “depression” into your search engine and see where it leads you
- treat yourself the same way that you would treat a friend who is depressed ~ lots of TLC
- try to focus your thoughts on something pleasant ~ something you enjoy doing or have fond memories of
- check out holistic measures such as meditation, acupuncture, or aroma therapy to see if one of these might work for you
- listen to music that will lift your spirits or/and make you feel a little more comfortable

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