



Bathed in Blue: A family's journey with bipolar depression

Rona Ross

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"Bathed in Blue; Richly Informative. Ms. Ross does not only give us a resourceful reference for bipolar disorder but also a fascinating narrative of her daughter's suicidal process." - **By Dr Paul Wong, Clinical Psychologist & Training Consultant Hong Kong University**

Description

This is a real life drama about a child of nine developing into a young woman and as the onset of puberty evolved, so did the condition bipolar affective disorder. Jennifer and her family struggled with an unnamed, unmedicated serious medical condition for 6 years before eventually the diagnosis bipolar affective disorder was made after a traumatic hospitalization. Once Jennifer was eventually hospitalized her troubles were not over. The metaphor for treating Jennifer was the equivalent of that of an ostrich, – some professionals putting their heads in the sand and hoping she would go away.

According to Stephen Fry's BBC's documentary 'The Secret Life of the Manic Depressive' the incidence of bipolar affective disorder has risen from 1%-5% in the population. New research proves that there are genetic links; bipolar affective disorder is not going away and the sufferers at risk of suicide are more than 15 times at risk to succeed at taking their own lives.

Jennifer's story highlights that the early diagnosis and subsequent treatment for bipolar disorder needs to be improved.

Jennifer asked me to be her voice to tell her story. The stigma of mental illness and high suicide rates renders sufferers invisible and after suicide - mute. Their stories buried or cremated with them. I describe our difficulties to access help for Jennifer in acute and chronic situations in two different countries. Jennifer describes her situation in the wards, in the community and her struggle to be heard by her psychiatrist and her thoughts on suicide, her treatment and her life.

After her fourth episode Jennifer sat down with me and asked why it was it so hard to get the help she needed? We decided together write about it. Hence her personal writings.

I hope by writing this book that the illness can be better understood by professionals and the community. I want the treatment to improve so much that the lives of chronic sufferers become more worth living and that suicide is taken seriously in sufferers with bipolar disorder and is no longer a high risk.

About the Author

When Rona was twelve her father was "committed" to a locked ward in the local psychiatric hospital. A short time later one of her aunts was also detained in the same hospital. Happily both relatives recovered.

At seventeen Rona trained and worked as a Registered General Nurse in Scotland. Her training included experience in this same psychiatric hospital where she worked on the same high security locked ward where her father was 'committed'. She also worked in Dr Naylor's famous metabolic unit for sufferers of manic depression.

Two decades later she visited her seventeen year old daughter, Jennifer, who was “committed” in a locked ward under section 28 of The Mental Health Act of 1984 over a six year period.

Therefore, mental illness is not a stranger to her.

Her two children were brought up in Hong Kong and both went to university in Britain. She did her degree in Humanities in Hong Kong and at the same time she trained as a counsellor with two Non Government Organizations. She has worked as a counsellor since 1988.

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