

## Himasiri De Silva, MD Psychiatrist & Medical Director, Behavioral Health Services



*Dr. De Silva, what's your history?*

I was sick of shoveling snow when I moved to Orange County from Cincinnati, OH, in 1979 as a new physician. I applied for privileges at several area hospitals, but within two years gave up my other affiliations to stay here. I was attracted to the mission of St. Joseph Hospital. I am a Buddhist and the non-profit mission and values (Dignity, Service, Excellence and Justice) here mirror my own beliefs about treating patients.

I have a private practice in Orange with my wife, Constance De Silva, MD, and Vinayak Shanbhag, MD. In my outpatient and inpatient practice I concentrate on mood disorders. I find psychiatry extremely satisfying, much more than financially. It's wonderful to give someone suffering from depression and thoughts of suicide the hope and help they need to get back to their life and family.

I'm proud to say that St. Joseph Hospital's Behavior Health Services are undoubtedly the best in the county. We have an excellent psychiatric staff that is very devoted almost exclusively to St. Joseph Hospital, and

personnel who put the patient first. The Administration is very committed to keeping and improving the service. A few years ago Tom Loates came to the then-new position of administrative director, and he's very committed and knowledgeable. We also have an excellent manager of Outpatient Services, Dr. Debbie Hutchinson. The chemistry among all of us is very good and there is a lot of enthusiasm to accomplish our plans, such as the medically compromised, bipolar and dual diagnosis tracks we now offer to outpatients.

*What changes would you make in your field?*

I'd like to see more objective evaluation and measurement of patients for a more accurate diagnosis, and with that more evidence-based medicine practiced. Primary care doctors are doing a good job of recognizing psychiatric illness. However, we still need to make sure they have the tools to rule out other conditions. Not only does inappropriate treatment for a condition such as bipolar waste time, it can complicate the problem. Not providing adequate care is very costly, and not just in terms of health-care. With prolonged illness, patients are not productive, but rather a burden to society, with billions wasted in lost wages.

Differentiating depression and bipolar dis-

order is one of the objectives of our 2nd annual Bipolar Symposium on Saturday, October 10, at the Balboa Bay Club. It was well attended and received last year and I expect another very worthwhile program this fall.

*What are your personal interests?*

I have three grown children. One of my proudest days was when my son, neurologist Neelantha De Silva, MD, decided to join St. Joseph Hospital's Medical Staff. My daughter practiced psychiatry with me here for a short time before taking a teaching position with the University of New Mexico, and my middle son is in finance. Along with family time I enjoy playing tennis and trying to grow orchids.

*Board-certified psychiatrist and American Psychiatric Association (APA) Distinguished Fellow Himasiri De Silva, MD, came to the U.S. from Sri Lanka after earning his medical degree. From 1994 to 1996 he was president of the Orange County Psychiatric Society and from 2001 to 2007 a representative in the APA Assembly. He has served as a reviewer for Electro Convulsive Therapy (ECT) and bipolar guidelines adopted by the nation. Dr. De Silva has been honored at the national and local levels by the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA), and is chairman of the DBSA's National Advisory Committee.*



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A PUBLICATION FROM THE ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL MEDICAL STAFF OFFICE



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