

## Vinayak Shanbhag, MD Psychiatry



mostly see patients suffering from depression, including post partum issues, and bipolar disorders. I also provide psychiatric consults for the hospital's Renal Transplant Services and Pain and Palliative

Care program patients. I'm always available to work with the medical community if I can be helpful for their patients.

### *What is your professional background?*

When I finished medical school in India I came to Chicago. I did my internship at Cook County Hospital and then completed my psychiatry residency at Chicago Medical School. I moved to Southern California and worked at Metropolitan State Hospital in Norwalk, then for the next five years was the medical director of Royale TRC in Santa Ana, providing therapeutic residential services.

In 1990 I joined Dr. Himasiri De Silva and the St. Joseph Hospital Medical Staff. On four separate occasions I've served as chairman of the psychiatry service and currently serve as vice chair. I'm also chair of the Committee of Physician Health, and medical director of the hospital's post-partum depression program, which began in 2006 with a three-year grant. In addition I am a council member of the Orange County Psychiatric Society and on voluntary faculty at UCI, teaching psychiatric residents. In my practice I

### *Why the specialty of psychiatry?*

I originally came to the United States 35 years ago for an OB/Gyn residency program, but it was full and I couldn't get in. Not wanting to wait a year, I chose to study psychiatry. The program had an excellent director who made the subject so interesting that I decided to stay in it another year, and then another. Ironically, through my work with post-partum depression patients I work closing with OB/Gyns.

Depression is such a troubling illness and I give patients as much hope as I can. Patients who have other physical issues often tell me they would rather deal with their other medical conditions than have to struggle with depression.

### *What is the biggest concern you have within your specialty?*

The ability to pay for services. Payments are not commensurate with other medical fields. Medicare reimbursement is around 50 percent, and that discrimination at the federal level trickles down. As a result, so many treatment programs, including those at St. Jude's, Western Medical Center Santa Ana, Hoag and Fountain Valley, have closed. There are significantly fewer beds available, and our hospital's unit is often full. We're trying to maintain a lean program that's attractive to insurance companies. Secondly, there is a shortage of psychiatrists in Orange County, making access to care challenging for the patients.

### *What do you enjoy outside of your practice?*

My two sons, ages 25 and 27, are both Eagle Scouts, and while I was an assistant scout master we often hiked and went on backpacking trips. I still enjoy being in the great outdoors. My wife and I enjoy traveling. In the last few years we've been to India and several locations in the United States.



A PUBLICATION FROM THE ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL MEDICAL STAFF OFFICE



1100 W. Stewart Dr.  
Orange, CA 92868



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