

# OVERCOMING



## Feel Like Yourself Again

Are you or a family member struggling with severe depression? Salina Regional's psychiatric services can help. Ask your doctor for a referral or call **785-452-6085** for more information.

*Wayne Wehe and his wife, Trudy, on their farm in Smith Center*



When other treatment methods didn't help Wayne Wehe, his family found **another option**

# DEPRESSION

Everyone feels down and discouraged from time to time when faced with serious problems. But when these feelings linger, intensify and begin to interfere with work, school or family responsibilities, it may be a sign of depression. At that time a physician, therapist, minister or someone trusted should be consulted.

Nearly everyone has a family member or knows someone who has depression. It's estimated that 18 million Americans experience major depression each year. On top of robbing a person of a happy and productive lifestyle, nearly 10 percent of those with depression attempt suicide—further complicating the seriousness of the disease.

Today many forms of medication and psychotherapy can successfully treat depression. Another form of treatment available at Salina Regional Health Center, called electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), may also be an option.

"In the last 10 years we've seen so many changes in psychiatric medicine," says Sally Leger-Schneider, LCMFT, Salina Regional's Psychiatric Services director. "It's the perception about how treatment was conducted 50 years ago that contributes to the reason there is so much stigma towards behavioral health today."

## THE STRUGGLES OF LIVING WITH DEPRESSION

Wayne Wehe, a retired farmer and factory worker in Smith Center, has battled depression for years. Medications brought the 77-year-old some relief but never completely controlled how he felt.

"It was a real down feeling," Wayne recalls. "I had a lot of uncertainty and kept thinking about whether I was doing anything good or not."

In late 2008 Wayne's condition worsened. He stopped eating and lost 40 pounds, suffered memory loss and became delusional. At one point he began wandering his farm looking for cattle he imagined he had poisoned. His wife, Trudy, feared for his life.

"It's hard to see someone you love go through something like this," Trudy says. "He always had such a good memory and I felt like I had to constantly watch him around the farm so that he didn't hurt himself."

Wayne was admitted to Salina Regional's Inpatient Psychiatric Unit and received intense psychotherapy treatment and medication management. With little progress, doctors informed Trudy ECT treatment might help bring Wayne back.

## ECT PROVEN TO BE SAFE

Electroconvulsive therapy uses a brief pulse of electrical current to induce a controlled, therapeutic seizure, which is thought to restore the chemical balance within the brain and allow it to restart. For the procedure, a patient undergoes general anesthesia and is given a muscle relaxant to keep the body from convulsing. Electrodes are then placed on the temples of the forehead to deliver the electrical stimulant. The entire procedure lasts about a minute.

"It's a validated, successful and powerful form of treatment most commonly used for severe depression," says Matthew Carey, M.D., Salina Regional psychiatrist. "Mr. Wehe was a candidate because he had severe depression with psychotic features that wasn't being effectively controlled by a number of medications."

There are relatively few risks associated with ECT and short-term memory loss is the most common. Still, knowing that ECT was safe wasn't

immediately comforting to Trudy.

"I kind of freaked out when Dr. Carey explained the procedure to us," Trudy says. "But, I called our five children and we decided it was the only way we could go. In the end I wish we would have started ECT much sooner."

Wayne received 12 ECT treatments while in the hospital and made great progress. He began talking with his wife again and began eating. He's had several outpatient ECT treatments since leaving the hospital.

His family, which includes 12 grandchildren, is grateful for the results.

"I didn't realize how bad of an effect it did have on everyone," Wayne says. "It was a hopeless feeling. I owe a lot of credit to my wife. There have been some rough times, but she's always stuck by me. I really appreciate that. In fact, I probably don't appreciate that enough."

With maintenance ECT treatments and medication, Wayne is able to enjoy retirement on the farm. He and Trudy enjoy gardening, attending family events and delivering Meals on Wheels to area residents who aren't able to get out of their homes.

"Really, ECT seems to make all of his medications work better," Trudy says. "He's always had trouble controlling high blood pressure and even that is much better now. It's been an amazing turnaround." ■



Matthew Carey, M.D.