



## NEWS RELEASE

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### BLACK DOG INSTITUTE THIRD ANNUAL WRITING COMPETITION

#### “The Getting of Wisdom - Managing the ‘Highs’ of Bipolar Disorder”

The Black Dog Institute today launched its third Writing Competition in as many years with the focus this time on Bipolar Disorder.

In its inaugural year (2004/2005), the Writing Competition looked at the origins of the term Black Dog to describe Depression. Contributions from the many entries subsequently formed the basis of a book titled *Tracking the Black Dog*.

The last Writing Competition attracted 634 entries – nearly triple the number in the first year- and targeted inspirational stories to help sufferers of the Black Dog to be better equipped.

This year the emphasis is on how sufferers of Bipolar Disorder, family members and friends have learned to manage the elevated mood, the ‘high’ that is characteristic of both Bipolar I and II conditions.

The high of a Bipolar Disorder is acknowledged as very powerful – and, can be both creative and hazardous. A sufferer can rapidly lose perspective and insight. Yet, many people manage to cope with the ‘high’ and limit the damage that can so easily and quickly occur.

While the Black Dog Institute website is already considered one of the most informative in Australia on the subject of Bipolar Disorder, it is looking to collate broader consumer insights on how sufferers manage the ‘highs’ and minimise the associated risk and consequences.

For example:

- What are people’s strategies?
- Are there reliable warning signs?
- Can the benefits of a creative surge be harnessed without getting ‘burnt’, or isn’t this possible?
- Without romanticising such a fierce illness, what are the upsides?

“By people sharing these stories with others, it will help the Institute develop a grass roots **Consumer Bipolar Disorder Survival Kit**,” according to Professor Gordon Parker, Executive Director of the Black Dog Institute.

“While creativity may be enhanced during a high, and sporting instincts may be sharper and improve performance, there are also disadvantages. It is well documented that the disinhibition of Bipolar Disorder sufferers can, at times, leave problems which individuals

can have great difficulty in dealing with during later ‘normal’ times,” according to Professor Parker.

“Entries to this year’s Writing Competition have the challenge of writing in less than 1500 words about their getting of wisdom in managing the Bipolar Disorder highs. It is these gems that will provide the consumer input and strategies that go toward establishing a more comprehensive Consumer Bipolar Disorder Survival Kit for others to access,” according to Professor Parker.

Black Dog Institute’s past writing competitions have generated a wealth of insights from those living with mood disorders. The edited writings from the first writing competition have been forwarded to all contributors and supporters, and copies are being made available to public libraries across NSW. The essays from the second competition are currently being edited for publication and will be distributed in the same way.

Entries to the 2005/2006 Writing Competition need to be submitted to the Black Dog Institute by close of business on 31 January 2007. Total prizemoney is \$3,500 with the winner receiving \$2,000, second place \$1000 and third place \$500. The Institute expects to follow the practice of previous years by also awarding 10 Highly Commended Certificates. A three-person independent judging panel will be appointed shortly to select the winning entries early in 2007.

**An application form and further details about the 2006/2007 Writing Competition are available on the website –**

**[www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)**

It is a condition of entry that material submitted will be available for further use by the Black Dog Institute for promotional, edited writings and research purposes. The Black Dog Institute is a not-for-profit research, educational and clinical body specialising in mood disorders.

### **EXPLANATION –Distinguishing between Bipolar 1 and Bipolar II**

**Bipolar I Disorder** is the more severe mood disorder. Individuals are more likely to experience mania and have longer highs, psychotic experiences and possible hospitalisation.

**Bipolar II Disorder** is defined as being less severe, with no psychotic experiences and with episodes tending to last only hours to a few days: a person experiences episodes of both hypomania and depression but no manic episodes and the severity of the ‘highs’ does not generally lead to hospitalisation.

**Media Inquiries:** Contact Ian Dose (M) 0419 618 606 or  
Email: [i.dose@unsw.edu.au](mailto:i.dose@unsw.edu.au)