

## Nutritional supplement to treat bipolar disorder?

The time-tested veterinary practice of treating a nervous condition in pigs with nutritional supplements may have paved the way toward a new therapy for helping people with bipolar disorder.

In a case-series study presented during the recent annual meeting of the Canadian Psychiatric Association, 10 men with manic depression showed considerable improvement in symptoms and were able to reduce significantly their dosages of psychotropic medications after taking a broad-based dietary supplement for between 6 and 24 weeks. Similar supplements are used to treat a swine disorder called ear-and-tail-biting syndrome.

The new supplement was brought to the attention of University of Calgary researchers Bonnie Kaplan and Steve Simpson by an Alberta man. His son and daughter, both of whom have bipolar disorder, improved dramatically after taking pills containing trace minerals, vitamins and amino acids.

"I was totally shocked," said Kaplan, a professor in the U of C's Faculty of Medicine. "It seemed ridiculous to think that vitamins and minerals could affect mental functioning. But then, on the other hand, it's not magic either."

A randomized, placebo-controlled trial of the new supplement, launched in late July and involving 100 patients, was made possible by a \$500 000 grant from the Alberta Science and Research Authority. — *Greg Basky*, Saskatoon