**Title of Paper:** “Decreased Risk of Suicides and Attempts during Long-term Lithium Treatment: a Meta-analytic Review (A CLASSIC)

Baldessarini RJ, Tondo L, Davis P, Pompili M, Goodwin FK, Hennen J. Bipolar Disorders 2006: 8: 625-639

**The Study Objectives:** This study was a meta-analytic comparison of rates of suicide attempts and completed suicide in patients with major affective disorders (MDD, MAD, Bipolar I/II, and some with Schizoaffective DO, bipolar type) with and without long-term lithium treatment.

**Results:**
- Overall risk of suicides + attempts was 5X LESS ON Li+ vs. off Li+
- Effects were similar when comparing completions vs attempts and bipolar do vs maj mood do
- Incidence Ratio of attempts: completions INCREASED by 2.5X ON Li+ suggesting reduced lethality conferred by lithium
- SEE magnificent Forest plots showing Risk Ratios and 95% Confidence Intervals

**Discussion:** The basis for the benefit remains unclear. Considerations include: 1) the risk of suicide is strongly associated with the depressive-dysphoric phases of illness and is rare in hypomania/mania. Lithium limits recurrence of depression in bipolar I/II; 2) inherent impact of lithium on impulsivity and aggression

**Questions for further consideration:**

1. Is this protection dose-dependent? In particular is it present at (non-therapeutic) Li+ blood levels of 0.4-0.6?
2. Is this protection conferred in patients NOT included in these studies: complex bipolar do, in mixed states, w/ rapid cycling, w/ signif. psychosis, with substance use, w/ other co-morbid.

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NOTE: Each issue of “Suicide (Prevention) Notes” is prepared by a member of the IOL’s Executive Committee. This issue was prepared by Adrienne Bentman, M.D., Director, Adult Psychiatry Residency Training.