



BIPOLAR DISORDER Factsheet

September 2021

Why assess differences in cognition between bipolar disorder and major depression?

Bipolar disorder is characterised by intermittent periods of mania and depression, while people with major depression do not experience mania. Mania involves elevated or irritable mood, which is often accompanied by inflated self-esteem or grandiosity, decreased need for sleep, distractibility, psychomotor agitation or excessive involvement in pleasurable activities. Manic episodes may involve psychotic symptoms including grandiose delusions. Depression is characterised by extended periods of sadness, a loss of interest in activities, loss of appetite, decreased energy, feelings of worthlessness, and difficulty concentrating. Suicidal thoughts may also be present.

Neurocognitive deficits are a feature of bipolar disorder and may also be present in people with major depression. Domains of intelligence, memory, executive functioning, language, information processing and attention can all be affected. Identifying any differences in these cognitive domains may assist correct diagnosis and treatment of the two disorders.

What is the evidence for cognition in bipolar disorder compared to major depression?

Moderate quality evidence suggests a medium-sized effect of better verbal memory (list learning) in people with major depression than in people with bipolar disorder, but only during euthymic phases, as there were no differences during depression phases. There were no significant differences between people with major depression or bipolar disorder on tasks assessing attention, processing speed, and executive functioning.

For more information see the technical table



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NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) is one of the largest independent medical and clinical research institutes in Australia and an international leader in neurological research.

Diseases of the brain and nervous system pose the greatest health, economic and social burden of any disease group because they are chronic, debilitating and have no known cures.

Medical research is the cornerstone of efforts to advance the health and wellbeing of families and the community. Our dedicated scientists are focussed on transforming their research into significant and practical benefits for all patients.

While we hope you find this information useful, it is always important to discuss any questions about bipolar disorder or its treatment with your doctor or other health care provider.

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

We are able to make significant advances due to the generosity of countless people. Your donation allows us to continue to work towards transforming lives. For information on how you can support our research, phone **1300 888 019** or make a secure donation at neura.edu.au.