



BIPOLAR DISORDERS Factsheet

September 2021

How is cognition in relatives relevant to people with bipolar disorder?

Cognitive deficits have been reported in people with bipolar disorder that are present early in the course of the disorder and may be stable over time. Relatives of people with bipolar disorder may show attenuated signs of cognitive deficits. If cognitive deficits found in people with bipolar disorder are also found in their relatives, this may be suggestive of an underlying genetic basis.

What is the evidence on cognition in relatives of people with bipolar disorder?

High quality evidence shows small to medium-sized effects of poorer processing speed, verbal fluency, executive functioning (on speed tasks) and social cognition in first-degree relatives of any age compared to controls without a first-degree relative with the disorder. There were no differences in executive functioning (accuracy), IQ, verbal memory, visual memory, working memory or sustained attention. In young first-degree relatives (10 to 25 years), there were small effects of poorer performance on IQ, verbal memory, visual memory, processing speed, sustained attention, and executive functioning, with no differences in working memory.

Moderate to high quality evidence suggests small to medium-sized effects of better IQ, verbal memory, working memory, processing speed, verbal fluency and accuracy of executive functioning in first-degree relatives of people with bipolar disorder compared to first-degree relatives of people with schizophrenia. There were no differences in executive functioning (on speed tasks), visual memory or sustained attention.

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.