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BIPOLAR DISORDER Factsheet

September 2021

What is decision making?

Decision making requires an individual to use their knowledge and experience of a context in order to choose a course of action. A person's ability to autonomously make decisions is referred to as their decisional capacity. Effective decision making aims to increase the likelihood of a favourable outcome in the relevant context, selecting responses that avoid unfavourable or harmful outcomes. People with bipolar disorder may show altered decision-making processes and impairments in their capacity to provide informed consent to medical or psychiatric treatment. People with impaired decisional capacity may not be able to understand information relating to the decision; appreciate the significance of the information and apply the information to decision-making; reason and compare potential consequences of the decision in a logical process; and/or communicate this decision.

A person's ability to make decisions may vary depending on the time or nature of the decision they are making. Decision making and decisional capacity may be associated with other areas of cognitive functioning, with a certain level of mental functioning required to make the most appropriate decisions in the situation.

What is the evidence on decision making in people with bipolar disorder?

Moderate to high quality evidence found a medium-sized effect of poorer decision making in people with bipolar disorder compared to controls. People with bipolar disorder and a history of suicide attempts showed more risky choices compared to both healthy controls and people with bipolar disorder with no history of suicide attempts.

For more information see the technical table



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.