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BIPOLAR DISORDERS Factsheet

October 2021

How does bipolar disorder impact on families?

A diagnosis of bipolar disorder can have considerable impact not only on the affected individual, but also on the people closest to them. Sometimes families experience different types of burden, particularly during acute phases of the illness. Burden is considered in terms of objective effects, such as illness severity or financial strain, but also in terms of subjective effects, such as the emotional impact of the illness on family members. As most caregivers are family members, the evidence regarding caregivers is reported in this family topic.

What is the evidence regarding impact on families?

Moderate to low quality evidence found lower parent-reported cohesion in families with a parent with bipolar disorder compared to families with no parental psychiatric disorders. There were no differences in family environment between parents with bipolar disorder and parents with other psychiatric disorders. Families with a child with bipolar disorder had higher conflict than families without a child with bipolar disorder.

Caregiver burden is apparent during the patient's depressive and manic episodes. Patient behaviours of most concern to caregivers include; impulsive spending, over activity, lack of sleep, over talkativeness, lack of insight, and odd, aggressive or unpredictable behaviours. Around half of all caregivers report depression symptoms, and around a third report contact with mental health services for their own symptoms. Caregiver knowledge is increased, and short-term burden is decreased following education about bipolar disorder.

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.