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BIPOLAR DISORDERS Factsheet

June 2020

What is bright light therapy?

Light therapy, also called phototherapy, involves the use of a bright artificial light to improve depressive mood. It has long been used in psychiatric practice, usually for the treatment of seasonal affective disorder. The mechanism by which light therapy regulates mood is unclear. It has been suggested to have modulating effects on serotonin and melatonin and on the synchronisation of circadian rhythms, which is why it is often accompanied by sleep deprivation. This topic assesses the use of bright light therapy for depressive symptoms of bipolar disorder.

What is the evidence for bright light therapy?

Moderate quality evidence suggests a medium-sized effect of improved depression following bright light therapy. This effect was not influenced by medication status, whether sleep deprivation was also given, the intensity or colour of the light, the patient's age or sex, or their age at illness onset.

Moderate to low quality evidence suggests a medium-sized effect of improved depression with light therapy when compared to placebo, medication, or sleep deprivation, with no increased risk of shifting to a manic state.

For further information see the technical table

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 www.neura.edu.au



NeuRA

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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.