



BIPOLAR DISORDERS Factsheet

July 2020

What is polypharmacy?

Polypharmacy is combined pharmaceutical treatment that is used for patients who are unresponsive or partially responsive to single therapies.

What is the evidence for polypharmacy?

Any combination therapy vs. any monotherapy or placebo;

Moderate quality evidence suggests fewer relapses with combination therapy than with monotherapy or placebo. The risk of relapse is highest in the first year of treatment.

Antipsychotic olanzapine + antidepressant fluoxetine vs. placebo, olanzapine or anticonvulsant lamotrigine;

Moderate to high quality evidence suggests greater improvement in depression with combined olanzapine + fluoxetine therapy.

Second-generation antidepressants + mood stabilisers or antipsychotics vs. placebo + mood stabilisers or antipsychotics;

Moderate to high quality evidence suggests adjunctive second generation antidepressants were associated with a small effect of greater improvement in depression in the short-term (< 12 weeks). However, there was an increased risk of switching to mania/hypomania in the longer term (~52 weeks).

Mood stabilisers + antipsychotics vs. mood stabilisers;

Moderate to high quality evidence suggests mood stabilisers + antipsychotics resulted in small effects of greater response and remission, and improved mania and depression. However, there were increased rates of discontinuation due to adverse effects with adjunctive antipsychotics, in particular, more sleepiness, somnolence, weakness, faintness, dizziness, appetite, weight gain, tremor, use of antiparkinsonian drugs, dry mouth and thirst, and changes in triglycerides, fasting glucose, and HbA1c levels.

Mood stabilisers + antipsychotics vs. antipsychotics;

Moderate quality evidence suggests mood stabilisers + antipsychotics resulted in small effects of better response and remission, and improved mania, but not depression. However, there were medium-sized to large effects of more tremor, sleepiness, and vomiting.

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.