



## BIPOLAR DISORDERS Factsheet

July 2020

### What is treatment resistance?

Bipolar disorder is a persistent, episodic and debilitating condition associated with recurring episodes of mania, hypomania, depression, and mixed manic-depressive states. These symptoms can lead to severe functional impairment, substance abuse, and suicidal behaviour. Treatment guidelines advocate the use of individual medications, with multiple medications indicated when a patient relapses on maintenance treatment. Unsatisfactory response to therapies is common in bipolar disorder, particularly during depression episodes. Hence, there is a need to study medications that specifically target people with treatment resistance.

### What is the evidence for treatment-resistant bipolar disorder?

Moderate to low quality evidence suggests clozapine and triiodothyronine may be effective for people with treatment-resistant bipolar disorder, although possible side effects of clozapine require careful monitoring. The remainder of the samples were too small (< 100 patients) to draw definitive conclusions for other medications, however review authors suggest there are encouraging findings for adjunctive aripiprazole, bupropion, ketamine, memantine, pramipexole, and pregabalin.

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

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