

Development and Diagnostic Issues of Bipolar Disorder

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INTRODUCTION

A person with bipolar disorder will experience changes in mood, energy, and activity levels that can make day-to-day living difficult. Bipolar disorder can cause severe disruption to a person's life, but the impact varies between individuals. With appropriate treatment and support, many people with this condition live a full and productive life. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), bipolar disorder affects over 10 million people in the United States or around 2.8% of the population. On average, a person will receive a diagnosis around the age of 25 years, but symptoms can appear during the teenage years or later in life. It affects males and females equally.

The National Institute of Mental Health describe the main symptoms of bipolar disorder as alternating episodes of high and low mood. Changes in energy levels sleep patterns, ability to focus, and other features can dramatically impact a person's behavior, work, relationships, and other aspects of life. Most people experience mood changes at some time, but those related to bipolar disorder are more intense than regular mood changes, and other symptoms can occur. Some people experience psychosis, which can include delusions, hallucinations, and paranoia. Between episodes, the person's mood may be stable for months or years, especially if they are following a treatment plan.

Treatment enables many people with bipolar disorder to work, study, and live a full and productive life. However, when treatment helps a person feel better, they may stop taking their medication. Then, the symptoms can return. Some aspects of bipolar disorder can make a person feel good. During an elevated mood, they may find they are more sociable, talkative, and creative. However, an elevated mood is unlikely to persist. Even if it does, it may be hard to sustain attention or follow through with plans. This can make it difficult to follow a project through to the end.

According to the International Bipolar Association, symptoms vary between individuals. For some people, an episode can last for several months or years. Others may experience "highs" and "lows" at the same time or in quick succession. In "rapid

cycling" bipolar disorder, the person will have four or more episodes within a year.

Mania

Hypomania and mania are elevated moods. Mania is more intense than hypomania.

Psychosis

If a "high" or "low" episode is very intense, the person may experience psychosis. They may have trouble differentiating between fantasy and reality. According to the International Bipolar Foundation, psychosis symptoms during a high include hallucinations, which involve hearing or seeing things that are not there and delusions, which are false but strongly felt beliefs. A person who experiences delusions may believe they are famous, have high-ranking social connections, or have special powers. During a depressive or "low" episode, they may believe they have committed a crime or are ruined and penniless. It is possible to manage all these symptoms with appropriate treatment.

CONCLUSION

Bipolar disorder, previously known as manic depression, is a mood disorder characterized by periods of depression and periods of abnormally elevated mood that last from days to weeks each. If the elevated mood is severe or associated with psychosis, it is called mania; if it is less severe, it is called hypomania. During mania, an individual behaves or feels abnormally energetic, happy, or irritable, and they often make impulsive decisions with little regard for the consequences. There is usually also a reduced need for sleep during manic phases. During periods of depression, the individual may experience crying and have a negative outlook on life and poor eye contact with others.

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Received date: 1 June, 2021; **Accepted date:** 15 June, 2021; **Published date:** 22 June, 2021

Citation: Broca A, (2021) Development and Diagnostic Issues of Bipolar Disorder. J Psychol Psychother. S2:005.

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