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### Understanding Bipolar Disorder

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# Understanding Bipolar Disorder

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## Pathophysiological Processes. Signs and Symptoms.

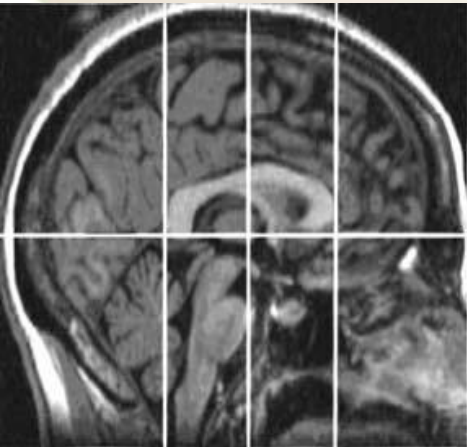
## Underlying pathophysiology.

## Significance of Pathophysiology.

The exact cause [and or pathophysiology] of bipolar disorder is not known, but there may be several factors involved, such as:

- Biological differences-** There are images of bipolar brains that show significant physical changes. Researchers are still uncertain if these changes may pinpoint the cause of bipolar.
- Neurotransmitters-** An imbalance in naturally occurring chemicals in the brain called neurotransmitters play a significant role in bipolar disorder and other mood disorders.
- Inherited traits-** Bipolar disorder has a higher instance with people who have a first-degree relative, such as a sibling or a parent, with the condition. Researchers are trying to find the gene or genes that are involved in causing bipolar disorder (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2015).

**Note: Adapted from Journal of Disability Policy Studies. p.1, by Enders, A., and Brandt, Z. (2007).**



## Introduction

Understanding bipolar disorder can be a challenge. Bipolar disorder is often seen in a hospital setting as a diagnosis or in a patient's history. As a healthcare professional one must learn how to communicate with all types of patients and their personalities, including those suffering from mental disorders/illness. All nurses, in any setting, are to care for and educate the sick and injured. An important part of education is getting the patient to listen and learn. Of course everyone learns differently and nurses must assess each patient to figure out each patient's learning style.

## Implications for Nursing Care.

Treatment for bipolar disorder is a combination of medication therapy and psychotherapy. According to Boland (2013), implications for nursing care entails helping patients gain insight on bipolar disorder and his/her current treatment. Increasing knowledge about how bipolar medications work and how well the patients manage their medications, is a primary role for the nurse. Nurses need to stress the importance of the appropriate follow up with blood work and writing down any side effects that occur while on medication therapy. [It is important to educate patients on signs and symptoms of lithium toxicity, such as slurred speech, weakness, and dizziness. Nurses need to stress getting routine blood work]. One main side effect and complaint of medication therapy is weight gain.

**Note: Adapted from Psychotropic-Induced Weight Gain: A Review of Management Strategie. p. 1, by White,W., Elmore,L., Luthin, D., and Cates, M.(2013).**

Pinto, Schub (2015) states bipolar disorder can affect work/school performance and relationships because of the ups and downs of depressions and mania. Bipolar disorder is treatable, but patients often have relapses which affects his/her quality of life (p.1). In general, people do not want to be labeled with a mental illness/disorder, because society has created a negative stigma on bipolar disorder; this is why most people do not want to seek help. Treatment may be difficult because of the extreme side effects of the medications and the stigma behind the disorder.

Weight gain can affect the patient's self-image, lower his/her self-esteem, which may reduce interactions with society. Weight gain is a common cause of medication non-adherence. Therefore it is imperative to have a thorough understanding of medication induced weight gain, including the incidence between bipolar medication therapies, and the pharmacological cause for adverse effects. Nurses can create different clinical strategies to avoid or manage the adverse effect. (p. 42). Nurses can discuss nutrition and exercise programs to assist with weight control. The more educated the patient is on the importance of taking these medications, the higher the chance of adherence of medication will occur. The table below will show incidence of weight gain with different psychotropic medications.

## Conclusion

Mayo clinic staff members (2015) state bipolar disorder causes extreme mood swings that include emotional highs (mania or hypomania) and lows (depression). With a depressive state one may feel extreme sadness/hopelessness and may become disconnected with the world. When your mood shifts in the opposite direction, one may feel elated and extremely energetic. Mood shifts may occur only a few times a year or as often as several times a week (p.1).

Pinto, Schub (2015) states bipolar disorder can affect work/school performance and relationships because of the ups and downs of depressions and mania. Bipolar disorder is treatable, but patients often have relapses which affects his/her quality of life (p.1). Relapses occur due to side affects and costs of the medications. Nurses can offer information on affordable prescription plans to aid in compliance of treatment.

Society has created a negative stigma on bipolar disorder. This negative stigma is potentially why most people afflicted with bipolar disorder do not want to seek help. Treatment is difficult because of the extreme side effects of the medications (primarily weight gain). Education in magazines and television can create a broad awareness of bipolar disorder. Being aware of a disorder will break the negative stigma, thus creating willingness for those who suffer to seek help. Medical staff (nurses) can encourage and reinforce the importance of staying on track with the appropriate medication and psychosocial therapy.

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