**FAKE QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

Participant ID: P015

Date: 14 February 2025

Study Title: Circadian Rhythms and Lived Experiences in Bipolar Spectrum Disorders

Interview by Researcher: Deeb Deeb

️ **Interview Transcript**

🎙️ Interviewer: Thank you for joining us today. Could you start by introducing yourself and telling me a little about your daily routine?

Participant: Of course. My name is Sarah Sarah. I’m 37, and I currently live in Truro, Cornwall, with my 8-year-old daughter. I’ve worked as a night-shift nurse at St. Mary’s Hospital for the past 12 years, although I recently dropped down to part-time due to my health. My day — well, my night — usually starts around 6 p.m. when I get ready for work. My daughter goes to my sister’s place when I’m on shift.

🎙️ Interviewer: How have your work and personal routines affected your mental health?

Participant: Honestly, I think they’re completely intertwined. Working nights has totally thrown off my rhythm. I’ve had sleep issues since I started shift work — waking up at odd times, being wide awake at 3 a.m. on my days off. Things worsened in 2019, when I was diagnosed with bipolar II disorder. My psychiatrist — Dr. Mark at Royal Hospital — was the one who picked up on the circadian link. I also went through a rough patch during the pandemic. I was hospitalised briefly in April 2020 after a severe depressive episode.

🎙️ Interviewer: That sounds difficult. Could you talk more about how these experiences affect your day-to-day life?

Participant: Sure. When I’m in a depressive phase, I can’t get out of bed for days. I once missed my cousin Hannah’s wedding in Bath, which I still feel guilty about. On the other hand, during hypomanic spells, I barely sleep, and I’ve gone to work after being awake for 36 hours. I keep journals now — tracking my sleep, mood, and meals. I use an actigraphy device from the research team and I also tried a sleep light box.

🎙️ Interviewer: Have you tried any interventions that helped?

Participant: Some things help in small ways. Melatonin makes me drowsy but gives me vivid dreams. I’m on quetiapine, which stabilises me but makes me groggy in the mornings. What helps the most is structure — I’ve started sticking to fixed mealtimes and using blue-light blockers at work. I even convinced my manager to adjust my rota so I don’t flip between night and day shifts anymore.

🎙️ Interviewer: What kinds of support have you received?

Participant: My sister Pava has been amazing. She lives 10 minutes away, in Redruth, and takes my daughter on weekends. My GP — Dr. Watson at Chapel Surgery — is understanding. I’ve also been part of a peer support group for women with bipolar. There are six of us, and we meet once a month at the community centre. I’m the only one who does shift work, though, which makes things a bit isolating.

🎙️ Interviewer: Has being part of this research changed anything for you?

Participant: Definitely. Just tracking my sleep has helped me see patterns. I realised that even one disrupted night can knock me off for the whole week. Also, knowing that someone’s researching this — that it’s not just “bad sleep” — makes me feel seen. I hope this work helps others like me.

🎙️ Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Participant: Just that managing mental health when your body clock is messed up is like trying to swim upstream every day. I wish more employers and even clinicians understood how vital circadian rhythms are. I’m grateful for the chance to share my story with you.