

The Right Medicine for Bipolar

Mood swings are strongly associated with women because compared to men, they are unpredictable. Men also exhibit mood swings, but they are not that noticeable. Occasional mood swings can still be accepted and it's but normal to encounter these things. But that about radical mood swings or emotional changes? Don't you think it's high time that you consult a doctor or a psychiatrist?

When people hear 'consulting with a psychiatrist', they think of it negatively. They think that only those with mental illnesses consult with these professionals. But did you know that it's one of the best ways to address your problem effectively?

Yes, by consulting with a doctor or psychiatrist, your condition can be evaluated and the extent of the disorder can be determined. You will be given the right medication and a treatment that should be followed in order to stabilize your condition.

Once you have bipolar disorder, like it or not, it's there to stay. You have to deal with unending episodes day in and day out. You need not fear this situation because it can be controlled, though not totally cured. With the help of medications, you're on your way to a normal life again.

Bipolar disorder onsets usually during the adolescence and the early 20's and the disorder is quite complex, thereby delaying accurate diagnosis for a couple of years. This is a great disadvantage for the bipolar patient because it would take years before he can receive treatment or medication.

Psychologists or psychiatrists diagnose and treat bipolar disorder. It would usually start with an interview and a clinical inventory or scale to assess the mental status and bipolar symptoms of the patient. The following are the clinical procedures that need to undertaken:

- MCMI III
- MMPI II
- ISS
- YMRS
- SRMI

The tests mentioned above can be done in outpatient settings or in hospitals,

either in writing or verbally. Mental illnesses and bipolar disorder are diagnosed using the guidelines contained in DSM-IV. According to this guideline, bipolar disorder is an unusually irritable or elevated mood that lasts for about a week together with three mania symptoms. However, four symptoms will be required just in case the person is irritable.

Adolescents and children present symptoms differently. Children exhibit psychotic features that are often misdiagnosed as schizophrenia. They are more aggressive and irritable, instead of being elated. The symptoms are also ongoing and chronic compared to adults that experience it in episodes.

Treatments of bipolar disorder are usually administered with medications. Mood stabilizers are used in combination with antipsychotics, antidepressants, and anticonvulsants. These medications regulate bipolar episodes.

Medications

Lithium. Oldest and frequently prescribed medication for bipolar disorder, but this is not recommended for patients having mixed mania. Sometimes, Lithium is used together with benzodiazepines or neuroleptics.

Carbamazepine. This is an anticonvulsant prescribed along with mood stabilizers. If the patient did not respond well with the lithium therapy, this medication can be used.

Valproate. If you're experiencing a rapid cycling of bipolar, this is a very effective medication. It can be used alone or in combination with other drugs.

Antidepressants may stimulate mania episodes in some patients, therefore used only for short term.

SSRIs. This is used to regulate depression and it includes fluoxetine, sertraline, and paroxetine.

MAOIs. This drug blocks the monoamine oxidase's action; and to avoid side effects, you should not eat foods with high amounts of tyramine.

Electroconvulsive therapy. This is very successful in treating bipolar depression but this is employed only after pharmaceutical treatment options have been exhausted. The treatment is given together with anesthesia and muscle relaxant to avoid convulsions.

Neuroleptics. To control manic symptoms, drugs like haloperidol and

chlorpromazine are used; but you must be aware that side effects are more severe with neuroleptics.

Counseling and Psychotherapy. Some experts claim that bipolar disorder is biological, and therefore, entails therapy. The therapy alone is not sufficient to substitute medications and so the patient must continue taking his medicines. It's a helpful tool for the patients and their families to encourage medication compliance and reduce suicide risks.

Bipolar medications are really important. When you're completely stabilized and controlled, don't stop taking medications. Remember that bipolar disorder is for a lifetime, and so you must continue with your medication and treatment.