

Tapestry of Causes of Bipolar Disorder

The medical society may have disagreed about so many diseases in this world since Pandora has opened the little box of horrors. One of the few things that they have agreed upon is that bipolar disorder is not caused by a lone factor. Several factors are intertwined together to produce a cloth of the illness. Hence, its being so called to run among blood relatives, other factors such as biochemical and environmental can not just be eliminated. In other words, having a relative with a bipolar disorder doesn't always mean you'll get it too, but there is a big possibility. Moreover, having a clean slate in the family background doesn't always save you from the lash of the sickness.

Luck seems to be the key to escaping any illness or disease.

Bipolar disorder is an illness characterized by cyclical mood swings which may start during the adolescent years or later in life. There are some cases where young children were afflicted with the disorder. It does not spare any race, gender, social class, or ethnicity. The disorder is treated with an amalgamation of mood stabilizers, anti-depressants, anti-manics or anti-psychotics, and psychotherapy.

In any case, individuals afflicted with the disorder seem to have biologic similarities that are detected by tests and imaging scans. The patients manifest an over production of cortisol (stress hormone); more than the usual hyperactivity in some parts of the brain that is related with movement and emotional functions; reduced brain activity in parts that are linked with cognitive functioning; fast biological clock (regulates the body's circadian rhythm: cycle of sleep and waking); and extreme flooding of calcium into the brain cells.

Bipolar disorder can be caused by either or a combination of these factors: biochemical or biological, genetic or familial, medication induced, and environmental.

Biochemically speaking, bipolar disorder takes place in a certain part of the brain where a number of neurotransmitters (a sort of chemical messenger) are said to have been malfunctioning. Dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine are just the three, maybe a lot more, of neurotransmitters involved in bipolar disorder. With this in mind, the disorder may be just sleeping or dormant for

years and can be set off by some external factors such as stress or crisis. A closer look at the brain research scientists have discovered that a patient's brain suffering from the disorder is "wired differently" from the normal person, which may explain the maddening alterations of extreme emotions.

As for its familial/genetic factor in the cause of the illness, individuals with first-degree blood relatives such as siblings, offspring, or parents are highly possible candidates for the disorder compared to those who have no relatives with the illness. Research scientists have been working hard to discover the specific genes that are involved in the disorder.

Bipolar disorder may also be triggered by medications. This usually happens during misdiagnosis, and therefore the patient is given a medication that may not be competent enough to control the disorder. With a different illness in mind (in some cases only the depressive mood could have been diagnosed), the physician may not be alert in detecting unusual changes in the patient that may be sidetracking from the original diagnosis. An example is the antidepressant medication which can activate a manic incident in patients who are vulnerable to bipolar disorder. This is due to the fact that the manic stage could have been overlooked upon in cases of misdiagnosis. Patients suffering from bipolar disorder should be prescribed both anti-manic and antidepressant medications. Antimanic medications produce a shield that protects the patient from mania that is stimulated by the anti-depressant.

Other drugs that can be abused which can cause mania in individuals are appetite suppressants, cold medications, corticosteroids, designer drugs (cocaine, amphetamines, etc.), and an excessive intake of caffeine. Abuse of alcohol and other stimulants can also trigger the disorder.

Stressful life events can also single-handedly trigger this mood disorder. Events in a person's life that causes much stress may vary from a shocking death of a loved one, career loss, pregnancy, geographic changes, to financial bankruptcies. Individuals who are highly likely vulnerable to a stress-caused bipolar disorder are adolescents, old adults, and pregnant women. These are population groups that can be easily pinpointed to have been undergoing huge changes in their lives and thus, with a shaky foundation, whether family support or low-self-esteem, they may easily find themselves in a crisis.

Studies have shown that a one time trigger of the disorder can cause a progression and the cycles may begin. If not diagnosed early, it can be hard to control the disorder. Nevertheless, it all boils down on how strong the individual's coping mechanisms are, and a little self-awareness, too.