

Executive Summary

Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Patients with Bipolar Disorder Second Edition

The purpose of this document is to introduce PerformCare's practice guidelines for the treatment and assessment of adults with bipolar disorder. These practice guidelines are meant to provide medical and psychological health providers with useful, quick reference tools for treating clients with bipolar disorder. They are intended to extend, not replace, sound clinical judgment. In particular, these adopted guidelines do not supersede the responsibility of the treating clinician to remain current on medications and informed on key regulatory and professional organizations when making important treatment decisions.

PerformCare has adopted the American Psychiatric Association's "Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Patients with Bipolar Disorder Second Edition (2002)." The following guide is designed to help providers, practitioners, and interested readers become familiar with key features of the documents and find the sections that will be most useful to them.

This guideline was developed through the completion of a comprehensive literature review. The initial draft of the guideline was completed by the work group, which included psychiatrists with clinical as well as research expertise in bipolar disorder. Multiple drafts were completed and sent to seven organizations and more than 40 individuals submitted significant comments. The final draft was approved by the American Psychiatric Association Assembly and Board of Trustees.

Based on the reviewed resources, the guideline explores psychiatric management of the disorder including the completion of a diagnostic evaluation, evaluating the safety of the patient, providing psychoeducation, promoting regular patterns of activity and sleep, and recognizing early signs of relapse. The guideline discusses demographic and psychosocial factors that could have an impact on treatment planning as well as the definition and epidemiology of the disorder. Evidence for the use of specific medicines to treat the disorder are explained noting the impact and side effects of the medications. Finally, future research needs are listed such as researching which pharmacotherapy regimens are most effective for rapid cycling.

The DSM-5: Bipolar and Related Disorders

Changes to the diagnosis of bipolar disorders that were made in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) are noted below.

Criterion A for manic and hypomanic episodes now stresses the importance of changes in energy, activity, and mood. A new specifier, with mixed features, has been added and can be applied to episodes of mania or hypomania when depressive features are observed. This specifier can also be applied to episodes of depression when characteristics of mania or hypomania are observed. The diagnosis of other specified bipolar and related disorder has been added, which can include the following situations: short duration hypomanic episodes, hypomanic episodes with insufficient symptoms and major depressive episodes, hypomanic episode without a prior major depressive episode, and a short-duration cyclothymia (less than 24 months).