

Addressing the unmet needs in the long-term treatment of bipolar disorder

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Bipolar disorder is a common, complex, relapsing and enduring mental illness associated with substantial morbidity and mortality, as well as higher healthcare costs. Only around half of the bipolar disorder population are accurately diagnosed. Those diagnosed and considered to have responded to treatment remain symptomatic for nearly half of their lives. Persistent psychosocial difficulties, cognitive deficits, sub-syndromal symptoms and inter-episode mood variation are still common even in euthymic or asymptomatic states. This causes impaired functioning, diminished quality of life, poor concordance with medication and increase the risk of relapse. Ultimately, it can lead to an enormous impact on patients, families and increase the burden of the illness. Although many advances have been made in the diagnosis and management of bipolar disorders, the currently available treatment options still fail to adequately and satisfactory address many of the important and usually neglected needs of these patients. The questions remain as to what is of a particular help for bipolar patients and what evidence science has got to address their needs and maintain their wellbeing.