



Association of VA Psychologist Leaders

Essential Healthcare for Veterans: Psychologists Improve Lives

BIPOLAR DISORDER: PATIENTS CAN “LIVE A LIFE WORTH LIVING”

- ◆ Among VHA enrollees who received specialty inpatient or outpatient mental health services in FY 2000, approximately 9% were diagnosed with bipolar disorder
- ◆ Bipolar disorder affects approximately 2.3 million American adults per year
- ◆ Without effective treatment, nearly 20% of bipolar sufferers will commit suicide.

“This illness wreaks havoc with what makes us most human--our attitudes, our relationships, how we feel about ourselves, and our ability to trust our judgments about those closest to us” (Wehr, T.A.¹)

Bipolar Disorder (formerly manic-depressive disorder) is a biologically based condition in which abnormalities in certain structures and functions of brain circuits cause extreme shifts in mood, energy, and functioning as well as severe psychosocial impairments.

Recent research supports the effectiveness of adding psychological interventions to pharmacotherapy to reduce rehospitalization, and improve overall psychosocial functioning and quality of life.²

Psychologists are trained in psychotherapeutic techniques that are beneficial for bipolar patients.³ It is important to include psychologists in treatment programs that target this population and in individual treatment plans of bipolar patients to ensure the most effective outcomes.

¹Bower, B. (2000). Pushing the mood swings: Social and psychological forces sway the course of manic depression. *Science News Online: The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science*, 157(15); (www.sciencenews.org).

²Huxley, N. A., Parikh, S. V., & Baldessarini, R. J. (2000). Effectiveness of psychosocial treatments in bipolar disorder: Status of the evidence. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, 8(3), 126-40.

³Patelis-Siotis, I. (Feb., 2001). Cognitive behavioral therapy: Applications for the management of bipolar disorder. *Bipolar Disorder*, 1-10; (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov).