

Functional impairment in patients with remitted bipolar disorder

AR Rosa^{*,†}, C Franco[†], A Martinez-Aran[†], J Sanchez-Moreno[†],
M Reinares[†], M Salameo[†], F Kapczinski^{*} and E Vieta[†]

**Bipolar Disorders Program, Molecular Psychiatry Laboratory, Hospital Clinic of Porto Alegre, Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil, †Bipolar Disorders Program, Clinical Institute of Neuroscience, Hospital Clinic of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain*

Background: Although the depressive and manic symptoms are associated with a marked functional impairment, a number of studies have now shown that some individuals with bipolar disorder have significant psychosocial impairment during inter-episodes. In this naturalistic study, our aim is to assess functional impairment regarding six specific domains of functioning and identify the clinical variables implicated with functional impairment in a sample of euthymic bipolar disorder patients.

Methods: Patients and healthy controls were recruited from the Bipolar Disorder Program at the Clinic Hospital of Barcelona. A Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV-TR, HAM-D and YMRS were used to diagnostic assessment and euthymia criteria. The Functioning Assessment Short Test (FAST) was employed to assess overall and specific domains of functional impairment.

Results: The mean FAST score was 18.55 ± 13.19 for patients and was 6.07 ± 4.72 for controls ($P < 0.001$). There were differences between patients and healthy volunteers regarding specific areas of FAST, such as, autonomy, occupational functioning, cognitive functioning, financial issues and interpersonal relationships ($P < 0.005$). A multiple linear regression was carried out using the total score of FAST as the outcome measure and the clinical state as the independent variable. The number of depressive episodes ($P = 0.047$), hospitalizations ($P = 0.018$) and the number of medications ($P = 0.021$) were strong predictors of the poor functioning ($R = 0.768$; $R^2 = 0.590$).

Conclusion: Euthymic bipolar disorder patients experienced difficulties in autonomy domain, occupational functioning, interpersonal relationships, cognitive functioning and financial issues. In addition, chronic and severe profile of the illness represented by previous depressive episodes, hospitalizations and polypharmacy could justify, in part, the high functional impairment here demonstrated.

Keywords: functional impairment, functioning, bipolar disorder