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EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR HEALTH INFORMATION, SELF-HELP AND PSYCHOEDUCATION IN BIPOLAR DISORDER

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Introduction: Many patients with bipolar disorders do not achieve clinical and functional recovery, even with good pharmacotherapy compliance. The influence of patients' attitudes, behavior, subjective state and interpersonal environment on course of the disorder points out the importance of psychosocial interventions and patients' active role to improve outcome.

Methods: A survey of recent guidelines, systematic reviews and clinical trials of psychosocial interventions for bipolar disorders was performed.

Results: Research evidence supports the efficacy and likely effectiveness of a number of psychosocial treatments: Individual and group psychoeducation, family-focused therapy, interpersonal and social rhythm therapy, cognitive behavior therapy. The lower cost and potential ease of dissemination of group psychoeducation suggest that this should be the first-line approach, with more complex interventions reserved to selected subgroups of patients. The following elements should be included in a basic psychoeducation package: information about the disorder and available treatment options, identification of early warning signs, encouragement of structured routines and healthy lifestyles, use of a mood diary and life-event charting to monitor mood patterns and effectiveness of intervention, improvement of communication skills, emotional self-regulation and social skills, reduction of self-stigmatization, stabilization of sleep/wake cycles, awareness of medication effects and improvement of decision-making skills on drug treatment in a collaborative way, acquisition of balanced attitudes towards the self in relation to the illness. **Conclusion:** The introduction of psychoeducation interventions with a focus on self-help strategies and patients empowerment and the adaptation of research models to everyday practice, can improve the outcome of bipolar disorders in real world.