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ADVANCES IN THE PATHOPHYSIOLOGY OF EPISODE-RELATED COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT IN BIPOLAR DISORDER

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There have been a number of recent findings that elucidate the ways repeated episodes relate to cognitive impairment and poor functioning in Bipolar Disorder. While available treatments are undoubtedly helpful, many patients are still lacking improvement and adequate prophylaxis even when adherence to treatment is accomplished. New research point to neural glial cells resilience and connectivity as major contributors to the pathophysiology of the disorder. In this context, growth factors such as the brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) have been pointed out as potential targets for the development of new treatments. In the psychological domain, better assessment of the cognitive decline associated with the disorder is a major issue. Once cognitive disability is present, interventions with the potential to recover functioning have been put forward. In the biological domain, strategies aiming at reducing neural damage and with the potential to regenerate connectivity among brain cell are promising avenues for the development of new treatments. Another important development would be the incorporation of biological markers as a means to help staging the degree of severity of the disorder and guide the pharmacological treatment. These topics and their relationship to the clinical context will be discussed in this session.

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