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CLINICAL FACTORS AS PREDICTORS ON FUNCTIONAL IMPAIRMENT IN BIPOLAR DISORDER

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Introduction: Recent studies have suggested that functional impairment in bipolar disorder may be strongly associated with residual depressive symptoms. However, there is a notable disparity between functional recovery and symptomatic recovery. This study was carried out to investigate clinical factors as potential predictors on functional impairment in a well defined euthymic bipolar sample.

Methods: Seventy-one patients 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 functional impairment. The FAST is a reliable and valid, interview-administered scale, rapid and easy to apply (3-6 min). It consists of 24 items which allow to assess six specific areas of functioning such as autonomy, occupational functioning, cognitive functioning, financial issues, interpersonal relationships, and leisure time.

Results: The sample comprised 36 (51%) men, aged 48 ± 13.56 years. Several clinical variables were associated with poor functioning on a linear regression model, such as age, depressive symptoms, number of previous mixed episodes and number of previous hospitalizations. This model explained 44% of the variance ($F=12.54$, $df=58$, $p < 0.001$).

Discussion: In this study, specific clinical and socio-demographic characteristics were identified as predictors of functional impairment in remitted bipolar patients. Poor functioning was identified in patients with older age and more severe illness course.