

A research paper
focused on bipolar
disorder



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Bipolar Disorder is a mental illness that has many effects on the human body and mind. Known as manic-depressive disorder, bipolar disorder is most commonly found in young adults, and in some cases, children as well (Gallagher, 2005, 35). Statistics show that bipolar disorder affects about four million people in the United States, and is becoming one of the most common disabilities in the United States today (Craighead and Nemeroff, 2001, 212) .

People with bipolar disorder undergo two specific mood swings: depression and mania. Depression and mania can be divided into three different subcategories: Bipolar 1 Disorder, Bipolar 2 Disorder, and Cyclothymia (Craighead and Nemeroff, 2001, 212). This paper will discuss bipolar disorder as well as give a short history of the mental illness, the subcategories and the symptoms, as well as causes and treatments.

Bipolar disorder was discovered during the time of the ancient Greeks. The Greeks believed that this form of manic depression dealt with of blood, phlegm, choler, and black bile, which are body fluids found in the human body (Martin, 2007, 16). These four body fluids were believed to have been the cause of bipolar disorder in that they caused chemical imbalances within the body. Moreover, the Greeks believed that by acquiring equilibrium within the body, a person would need to purge themselves, or release certain amounts of these fluids. However, Plato sought the belief that bipolar disorder was the cause of inspirations such as God, writings, and love (Martin, 2007, 16).

Another idea occurred with the reason that bipolar disorder was caused by environmental factors such as stress, Satan, God, education, and poverty (Martin, 2007, 16). For many years, bipolar disorder was argued to have been caused by spiritual factors as well; however, researchers narrowed the causes down to intellect verses emotion. It was argued that intellect (behavior/rational thinking) was the cause of bipolar disorder rather than fluctuation emotions (Martin, 2007, 17).

As discussed in *Bipolar Expeditions: Mania and Depression in American Culture*, Charles Darwin supported this belief by stating that no one could fully comprehend a person's emotions because no one person can fully comprehend another's emotions (Martin, 2007, 18). Bipolar disorder has eventually been recognized to be caused by chemical imbalances in the brain. Since ancient Greek times, researchers have discovered more information about bipolar disorder including different forms organized by severity, symptoms, causes, and treatments.

Bipolar Disorder is known as manic-depressive disorder that has a great effect on the human mind. For many years, this disorder was also referred to as manic depressive psychosis and manic depression, until 2001 when it was officially termed " bipolar disorder" (Gallagher, 2005, 35). Due to this disorder, the mind goes through different changes of thought, also known as mood swings (Craighead and Nemeroff, 2001, 212). Mania and depression are the two mood swings that a person with bipolar disorder endures. A person with bipolar disorder will either alternate between mania and depression or will experience them simultaneously in various episodes (Craighead and Nemeroff, 2001, 212). Mood swings increase in severity

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either over a period of a few years, or in some cases, a few days (Craighead and Nemeroff, 2001, 212). There are many symptoms and causes of bipolar disorder that are easily recognizable. These symptoms and causes are organized into three different subcategories.

The three subcategories are organized by increasing severity of bipolar disorder. The first subcategory is Bipolar 1 Disorder. The main symptom of Bipolar 1 Disorder is an increase in manic mood swings which generally affects daily activities such as work, school, or family (Mayo Clinic Staff). Manic mood swings commonly cause effects such as extreme optimism, aggressive behavior, agitation/irritation, loss of sleep, abuse of drugs/alcohol, or delusion (Craighead and Nemeroff, 2001, 212). The second category is Bipolar 2 Disorder. In this subcategory, people endure depressive mood swings including emotions of sadness, anger, happiness, anxiety, guilt, irritability, and suicidal thoughts (Mayo Clinic Staff). The final subcategory of bipolar disorder is Cyclothymia which is the least severe form of bipolar disorder, but does include highs and lows of depression. Other symptoms of bipolar disorder include mood swings over a period of a few years, days, or hours varying on season change, as well as psychosis (hallucinations/delusions) (Craighead and Nemeroff, 2001, 212).

There are a few ways that bipolar disorder can be managed and made less severe. The first form of treatment is medication (Mayo Clinic Staff).

Medication is believed to aid with balancing mood swings, as well as lessen depression and anxiety. Finding the right medication is difficult because certain medications can negatively affect a person's disorder by increasing symptoms they may already have. However, lithium carbonate is a well

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known medication that positively affects about 50- 60% of bipolar patients. Not only does lithium carbonate reduce the symptoms, it also prevents further episodes of mania (Craighead and Nemeroff, 2001, 213-214). Mood stabilizers are also mixed with antidepressants that aid in preventing both manic and depression episodes. Nevertheless, antidepressants can further the severity of manic episodes, as well as mood changes (Craighead and Nemeroff, 2001, 214).

Another form of treatment is psychotherapy (Craighead and Nemeroff, 2001, 214). Psychotherapy is a form of therapy that aids the patient in recognizing his or her disorder, the symptoms, and causes. This form of treatment also teaches the patient ways to take control of his or her own life. Psychotherapy is very beneficial because it allows the patient to recognize her or her own disorder, reduce symptom severity, become more compliant towards medications, and allow the patient to better manage their emotions and moods (Craighead and Nemeroff, 2001, 214).). Three different forms of psychotherapy are psychosocial therapy, interpersonal and social rhythm therapy, and individual cognitive-behavioral therapy. These different forms of psychotherapy specifically aim at reducing symptoms, while also teaching the patient ways in which he or she can deal with events such as personal loss, disputes, role transitions, and drug abuse (Craighead and Nemeroff, 2001, 214). The final form of treatment is hospitalization which is only for severe cases of bipolar disorder. A patient is hospitalized only if he or she is suicidal or is slowly becoming psychotic (Mayo Clinic Staff). Hospitalization allows the patient to work closely with many specialists that are constantly

watching over his or her patient and analyzing the ways in which the environment and medications affect the patient.

During the time of the ancient Greeks, it was believed that bipolar disorder was caused by inspirations, environment, spiritual factors, as well as emotions (Martin, 2007, 18). However, all these factors are not the main cause of bipolar disorder, but rather, chemical imbalances within the brain. Therefore, bipolar disorder is a mental illness that has many effects on the human body and mind (Craighead and Nemeroff, 2001, 213).

In conclusion, this mental illness has been commonly diagnosed in both children and young adults. Depression and mania are two mood swings that are common with bipolar disorder. Depression and mania can be divided into three different subcategories: Bipolar 1 Disorder, Bipolar 2 Disorder, and Cyclothymia. These three categories all result in many forms of symptoms and causes, some including depression, irritability, loss of sleep, weight gain, and anxiety. Forms of treatment for this mental illness are medication, psychotherapy, and hospitalization (Craighead and Nemeroff, 2001, 214). Though Bipolar Disorder is a long term mental illness, there are treatments that can suppress the severity that will, in turn, aid the patient to live a more mentally stable life.