Medical Studies for Bipolar Disorder

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Getting Involved in Medical Studies for Bipolar Disorder

If you suffer from bipolar disorder and consider participating in a research study, it is normal to have some concerns. You know your condition affects your emotions and feelings, and at times your judgment is impaired. During a manic episode, you may feel fidgety and restless and may not have the patience to spend time in a research clinic. We'll be looking at medical studies for bipolar. Here are a few tips you should consider before enrolling in a study.

1. Book a consultation with your doctor.

See a doctor who knows your condition well - either your GP or psychiatrist. Your condition should be stable and symptoms well controlled to participate in a study (although in rare cases, a study may seek to specifically assess your symptoms during a manic or depressive episode). Ask his or her opinion about getting enrolled in the study and how you may benefit from it.

2. Become familiar with different types of studies.

In some cases, the studies will evaluate your condition, without recommending a new drug. These studies are called evaluation studies. For example, the researchers will look at your brain activity on MRIs and see how it works. In other evaluation studies, the researchers may look into the impact of various lifestyle choices (i.e. diet, fitness) on your bipolarity.

Other studies, called intervention studies, will involve the prescription of drugs. Often these studies compare a new drug with an old one or a placebo (a dummy pill) to see which is most effective and safe. Ask yourself and your doctor which type of study would best suit your needs.

3. Check websites for studies in progress, that are recruiting participants.

Go to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) website, search by condition (bipolar) and see which studies are now recruiting patients. http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/trials/bipolar-disorder-manic-depressive-illness.shtml

For example, in August 2014, there were a few evaluation studies recruiting children aged 7-17. The studies range in purpose. Some assess how a bipolar brain functions when compared with one afflicted with ADHD, while others seek to develop new MRI techniques to better diagnose mood and anxiety disorders. A few interventional studies are recruiting adults to evaluate drugs such as Ketamine and Riluzone for bipolar disorder. Several other studies are also available on NIH’s website – you can simply click on the title, and a second page with details of the study will open.
Carefully read the goal of the project, how it's designed and for how long it will be conducted. When you check the selection criteria, you will notice that most include the ability to provide informed consent forms (which means that your condition should be stable and well in control). Another important factor to consider is the location. Although

some studies cover the cost of traveling, you still have to keep in mind the location as you will need to attend the research center regularly.

4. Contact the research center.

Each study will include a contact phone number listed as Patient Recruitment or Public Liaison Office phone number. Give them a call and ask for the steps you need to take to be enrolled in the study.