Bipolar Doctors

by ERIC PATTERSON

Building a Bipolar Treatment Team

Bipolar disorder is one of the most complex and difficult conditions for anyone to treat. With increased risks of suicide during depression and risks of impulsive, potentially life-altering decisions during mania, you need treatment that is thorough, preventative and effective.

Since the best possible treatment is critical for success, you should put together a team of bipolar doctors and other medical professionals who are invested in your success. Think of your medical team as a baseball team. In baseball, you need to field a team comprised of different positions. If you have several second basemen, your team will struggle with pitching or out fielding. A well-rounded treatment team is a good treatment team.

Filling the Positions

- **Team leader**. Every treatment team needs a leader to direct them. The leader coordinates all of the services in place; schedules appointment ensures you get there. The leader advocates for you and gives the professional information needed to make appropriate recommendations for your care. There is no better team leader for your care than you. Are you up to the challenge?
- **Prescriber**. Bipolar treatment is rarely successful without medication. Your prescriber can be a psychiatrist, nurse practitioner or even a psychologist. Types of education and experiences will vary from one type of prescriber to another. Seek feedback from your community and don't be afraid to ask for a second opinion.
- **Therapist.** With medications in place, you and your therapist can work on a number of issues to improve your well-being and safety plan for you next change in moods. Like prescribers, therapists come in different varieties, psychotherapists, for example. Perhaps more significant than education or experience is the connection and rapport you have with your therapist. The best client-therapist relationships are ones full of trust and respect.
- **Case Manager/Peer Specialist**. Case managers can organize services and help manage appointments. They can also help you access resources for which you may qualify. Peer specialists act in a similar way as a case manager; the difference being that a peer specialists have first-hand experience with mental illness. Both services can be very helpful when employed properly as they can typically meet you at your home or in the community.
- **Mobile crisis**. Many areas offer this service, which is to be used when symptoms become unmanageable. Depending on the situation, a crisis specialist can come to your home and assess your risk to self or others. They can recommend an appropriate course of action and assist in helping your access it.
- **PCP.** Your primary care physician is an important part of your team since your physical health impacts your psychological health, and many people with bipolar disorder have physical illnesses as well. Helping your body stay healthy helps your mind stay healthy.
- **Others**. Personal trainers, chiropractors, alternative medicine practitioners, etc. can all be useful. A bigger team is a better team; explore your options.
- **Friends and family.** Of course, your treatment team should include nonprofessionals like friends and

family. Choose your team wisely. Depending on your symptoms, you may want to utilize certain supports in certain situations. As in baseball, these supports can be called off the bench late in the game when you need a big hit.

Medical Minds

Build your team of bipolar doctors, other medical professionals, and friends and family through trial and error, second opinions and exploring your options. You are in control of your team. You are worth too much to settle for anything other than the best.