



# Effective Health Care Treatments for Bipolar Disorder

## Results of Topic Selection Process & Next Steps

- *Treatments for Bipolar Disorder* reflects an interest of patients and caregivers in potential treatment strategies for bipolar disorder. This topic was found to be addressed by an in-progress AHRQ systematic review. A research protocol for this in-progress review is currently posted on the Effective Health Care (EHC) website. Additionally, a 2012 AHRQ systematic review examined antipsychotics in adults with bipolar disorder. Given that the in-progress systematic review addresses the scope of this nomination, no further activity will be undertaken on this topic.
  - Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Treatment for Bipolar Disorder: Research Protocol. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. June 2014.  
<https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/search-for-guides-reviews-and-reports/?pageaction=displayproduct&productid=1926>
  - Abou-Setta AM, Mousavi SS, Spooner C, et al. AHRQ Comparative Effectiveness Reviews. *First-Generation Versus Second-Generation Antipsychotics in Adults: Comparative Effectiveness*. Rockville (MD): Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (US); 2012.  
<https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/search-for-guides-reviews-and-reports/?pageaction=displayproduct&productID=1054>

## Topic Description

**Nominator(s):** Individual

**Nomination Summary:** The nominator is interested courses of treatment for adults with bipolar disorder who regularly see a psychologist, and which treatments provide statistically better results. Specifically, the nominator is interested in the comparative effectiveness of anticonvulsants versus antipsychotics, lithium, antidepressants, and benzodiazepines. The outcome of interest in improvement in the symptoms of depression and mania. The nominator is interested in harms and side effects, including Stevens Johnson syndrome and serotonin syndrome, among others.

**Key Questions from Nominator:**

- 1a. For adult patients with bipolar disorder, what courses of treatment are available?
- 1b. What are the benefits and harms of those treatments?
2. Which treatments for bipolar disorder provide statistically better results?

## Considerations

- The topic meets EHC Program selection criteria. (For more information, see <http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/submit-a-suggestion-for-research/how-are-research-topics-chosen/>.)
- The nominator is interested in the available treatment for adults with bipolar disorder who are regularly seeing a psychologist. The in-process AHRQ systematic review examines pharmacological treatments, behavioral health treatments (ie, psychotherapy), somatic treatments (ie electroconvulsive therapy and transcranial magnetic stimulation), and comprehensive treatment programs that may include multiple types of treatment.

- The nominator is interested in the comparative effectiveness of anticonvulsants to antipsychotic drugs, lithium, antidepressants, and benzodiazepines. The in-process AHRQ systematic review will present evidence about medications for bipolar disorder, including anticonvulsants, antipsychotics, and mood stabilizers (lithium and chlorpromazine).<sup>1</sup> Three of the featured atypical antipsychotics in this systematic review are approved by the FDA to treat depression.<sup>1</sup> Antipsychotics are examined in a 2012 AHRQ systematic review.<sup>2</sup> Benzodiazepines are not used alone to primarily treat bipolar disorder, and due to their addictive properties, are only used in extreme cases of anxiety. Thus, comparing this drug to other treatments for bipolar disorder is not clinically relevant.
- In addition to information about treatments for bipolar disorder, the nominator is interested in benefits and harms of such treatments. The benefits of interest are improvements in symptoms of depression and mania. Both the in-process and the 2012 AHRQ systematic reviews examine outcomes of various treatments for bipolar disorder.<sup>1,2</sup> The harms of interest are Stevens-Johnson syndrome associated with antipsychotics, serotonin syndrome, and other miscellaneous side effects. Though rare, the occurrence of Stevens-Johnson syndrome while taking antipsychotics, such as carbamazepine, has happened, and should be closely monitored by a health care professional.<sup>3</sup> Serotonin syndrome can develop if an individual takes two drugs that effect the body's serotonin levels together.<sup>4</sup> All medications should be prescribed by a medical professional who has access to all of an individual's medical records, in order to avoid such an interaction. Both the in-process and the 2012 AHRQ systematic reviews examine various side effects, risks, and harms of treatments for bipolar depression.<sup>1,2</sup>

## References

1. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Treatment for Bipolar Disorder: Research Protocol. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. June 2014. <https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/search-for-guides-reviews-and-reports/?pageaction=displayproduct&productid=1926>
2. Abou-Setta AM, Mousavi SS, Spooner C, et al. AHRQ Comparative Effectiveness Reviews. *First-Generation Versus Second-Generation Antipsychotics in Adults: Comparative Effectiveness*. Rockville (MD): Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (US); 2012. <https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/search-for-guides-reviews-and-reports/?pageaction=displayproduct&productID=1054>
3. Desarkar P, Nizamie SH. Risperidone-induced erythema multiforme minor. *British journal of clinical pharmacology*. Oct 2006;62(4):504-505.
4. Heller JL, Zieve D, Ogilvie, I. Serotonin Syndrome. U.S. National Library of Medicine. July 2014. <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/007272.htm>. Accessed May 8, 2016.

## Acknowledgements:

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## Original Nomination

### Topic Suggestion Description

Date submitted: March 1, 2008

Briefly describe a specific question, or set of related questions, about a health care test or treatment that this program should consider.

For adult patients with bipolar disorder, what courses of treatment are available? Concurrently, which treatments provide statistically better treatment results? In adults with bipolar disorder regularly seeing a psychologist.

### Importance

Describe why this topic is important.

There is a lack of information available to patients through google searches and print resources comparing the effects and treatment successes or failures of certain drugs with regards to bipolar disorder.

### Potential Impact

How will an answer to your research question be used or help inform decisions for you or your group?

No answer provided.

### Technical Experts and Stakeholders

Are there health care-focused, disease-focused, or patient-focused organizations or technical experts that you see as being relevant to this issue? Who do you think we should contact as we consider your nomination? This information will not influence the progress of your suggestion through the selection process, but it may be helpful to those considering your suggestion for further development?

No answer provided.

### Nominator Information

Other Information About You: (optional)

Please choose a description that best describes your role or perspective: (you may select more than one category if appropriate)

Patient/Consumer

May we contact you if we have questions about your nomination?

Yes