

A STUDY OF EFFECTIVENESS OF STRUCTURED GROUP PSYCHOEDUCATION FOR BIPOLAR PATIENTS. A CONTROLLED TRIAL IN ITALY

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Background: Recent reviews of evidence-based guidelines for the clinical management of Bipolar Disorders (BD) have recommended that “all patients with BD should be offered group or individual psychoeducation” to prevent relapse, improve treatment adherence, quality of life and functioning.

The present study aimed at evaluating the psychoeducation in routine mental health.

Methods: One hundred and two outpatients were recruited from two Italian DMHs. Inclusion criteria were a lifetime diagnosis of BD type I or II assessed by SCID-I, being euthymic for at least 3 months. Exclusion criteria were a DSM-IV Axis I comorbidity, mental retardation (IQ < 70), organic brain damage. All subjects received standard psychiatric care, with standard pharmacological treatment; one group received additional 21 weekly sessions of psychoeducation group, according to Colom and Vieta model.

Results: Data show that the number of patients hospitalized during the 1-year follow-up, the mean number of hospitalizations per patient and the mean number of days in hospital were significantly lower for psychoeducated patients.

Conclusion: Our study supports the view that group psychoeducation is an efficacious intervention to prevent patients' hospitalization and decrease hospital days in pharmacologically treated patients with bipolar disorder, also in routine clinical settings. The results seem to confirm that the psychoeducation promotes an improvement in the course of illness, avoiding acute phases, and producing a greater stabilization of the disease and consequently an improvement in quality of life in people with BD.