Bipolar Disorder – The Orphan for Decades Becomes a Clinical and Health-Economic Challenge for the 21st Century

Until the early 1990s, clinical research in bipolar disorder was an almost neglected discipline. With increasing awareness of the health-economic burden of the disease (see http://www.who.int/mental_health/aboutMH.html), especially phase III drug research boomed during the last decade.

But there are still many areas in basic research of this disorder which appear as a white spot. Only recently have we gained more insight into the connections between the immune system and mood disorders, and few data exist so far on the influence of a disturbed circadian rhythm. Additionally, the concept of the disease broadened and became more complex, and consequently we need new instruments for an adequate description of the course of illness. Finally, besides searching for new drug formulas, it may be wise to (re)discover established medications for this disorder.

The 2nd Symposium on Bipolar Disorder of the Stanley Foundation Centers of Munich and Freiburg, which took place in Freiburg on November 17 and 18, 2000, tried to focus especially on these topics. Supported by a grant from Glaxo-Wellcome, it was possible to bring together distinguished scientists and clinicians actively involved in bipolar research. Similar to the proceedings of the 1st Symposium in Munich in 1999, outstanding presentations and case histories were chosen by the scientific committee and compiled for this supplement of *Neuropsychobiology*. We hope that the reader will share our enthusiasm for bipolar research and that the present supplement will be as inspiring to the readers as the symposium was for the participants.

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