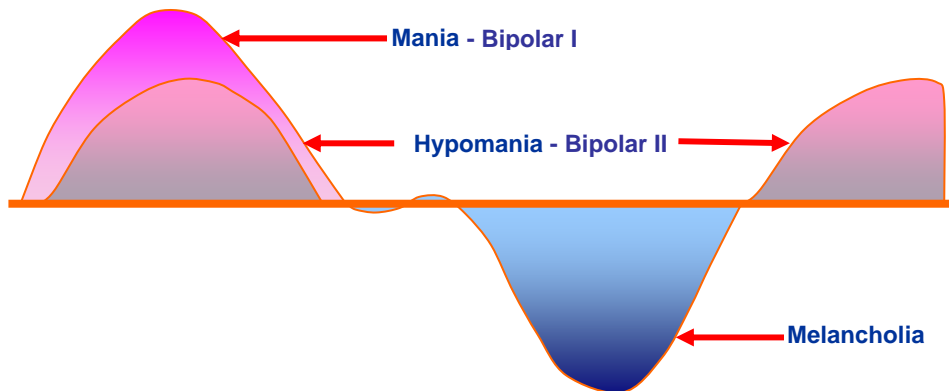


About Bipolar Disorder



It is imperative that general practitioners screen for bipolar disorder in a depressed patient. Of the patients referred by general practitioners to a psychiatrist, some 30% of depressed patients have a bipolar course. In those with bipolar disorder, some 80% of depressive episodes are psychotic or melancholic in type.



People with bipolar disorder also encounter the usual 'ups and downs' of life. 'Hypomania' is a less severe mood swing and some earlier episodes may have gone unnoticed. Hypomania can be difficult to interpret during adolescence, when individuals are 'moody' in general, or where there is substance abuse.

Diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder – Key Features of 'Highs'



MOOD ELEVATION

- More confident
- See things in new light
- Creative ideas & plans
- Things vivid/crystal clear
- Spend more money
- Increased libido



MYSTICISM

- Lots of coincidences
- Feel at one with nature
- See special meaning in things
- Mystical experiences



DISINHIBITION

- Say outrageous things
- Feel 'high as a kite'
- Laugh more
- Do outrageous things



IRRITABILITY

- Talk over people
- Feel angry
- Thoughts race
- Feel irritated

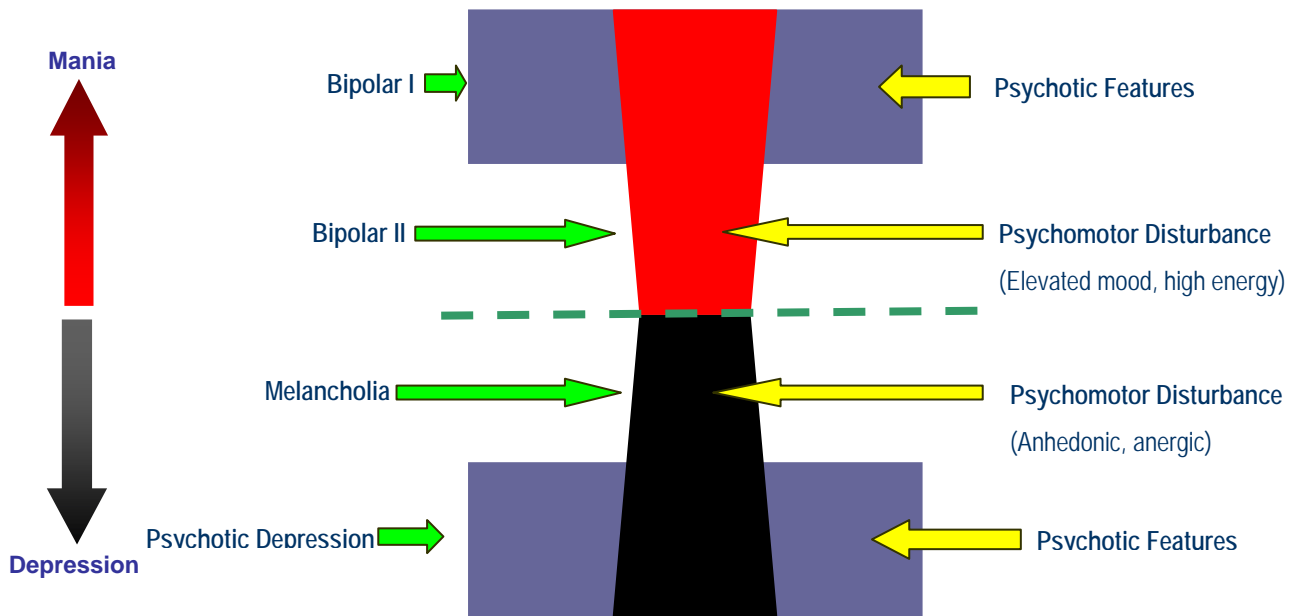
A Bipolar assessment tool can be found on our website: blackdoginstitute.org.au



Black Dog Institute New Categorical 'Mirror Image' Model for Bipolar I and II

As with unipolar depressions we now recognize subtypes of bipolar disorder, predominately Bipolar I & II. There is some debate over criteria to delineate these types, cf DSM-IV, Askisal's 'Spectrum Dimensional Model'. Based on its research and clinical experience the Institute believes that it is the presence of psychotic features in the manic phase that determines BP-I status.

This can be illustrated by the following model:



Management of Bipolar Disorder



Needs to be pluralistic and involve pharmacological and non-pharmacological approaches. 3 key elements:

- Psycho-education
- Medication
- Relapse prevention and wellbeing plans

Different medication regimes for different 'phases':

- Depression
- Mania/hypomania
- Maintenance

See separate information sheets dealing with each of these issues.

Access useful information for GPs about bipolar disorder on our website: blackdoginstitute.org.au



Useful References

Parker, G (Editor) (2008), **Bipolar II Disorder: Modeling, Measuring and Managing**. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Depression Information for GPs: About Bipolar Disorder (August 2007) <http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au>