

Case Study: Bipolar Mania

Noreen, age 32, had always been described as “moody.” Depending on what was happening in her life at the time, she could be very sad and depressed or very lighthearted and happy. During her “down” times she would feel tired, experience loss of appetite, and sleep a lot. During her “happy” times, she would party a lot, be very outgoing, and have a remarkable amount of energy. Noreen did well in college and graduated at age 26 with an MBA. Since that time, she has been employed in the administration department of a large corporation, in which she has had several promotions. Two weeks ago, management was to make the announcement of who would be fulfilling the position of vice president of corporate affairs. Noreen and a male colleague, Ted, were vying for the position. It was a choice position that Noreen desperately wanted. She became very depressed when the announcement was made that Ted had been chosen. She stayed at home, in bed, and slept a lot for several days. On about the fourth day, she got up, feeling exhilarated, and decided to go shopping. She spent over \$1,000 on clothing. She then decided to have a party for several hundred people, ordered the catering, and planned all the details. Tonight, was the party. Noreen wore a new, very expensive dress, drank a lot of champagne, was very jovial and seductive, and bragged to everyone who would listen that she would soon be getting a new job and that the people at her old organization would be sorry they had failed to promote her. She left the party with a man she hardly knew. At 3 a.m., she was picked up by the police under the grandstand at the local baseball stadium, wearing only her underclothes and high-heeled shoes and carrying a half-filled bottle of champagne. She was alone and speaking very loudly and rapidly. The police brought her to the emergency department, where she was admitted to the psychiatric unit with a diagnosis of Manic Episode.

Symptoms of Bipolar Disorders

Next to each of the behaviors listed below, write the letter that identifies the disorder in which the behavior is most prevalent.

- a. Cyclothymic disorder b. Bipolar I disorder c. Bipolar II disorder
d. Manic episode e. Delirious mania

___E___ 1. Clouding of consciousness occurs.

___A___ 2. Characterized by mood swings between hypomania and mild depression.

___E___ 3. Paranoid and grandiose delusions are common.

___D___ 4. Excessive interest in sexual activity.

___D___ 5. Accelerated, pressured speech.

___E___ 6. Frenzied motor activity, characterized by agitated, purposeless movements.

___C___ 7. Recurrent bouts of major depression with episodes of hypomania.

___B___ 8. Recurrent bouts of mania with episodes of depression.

Please read the chapter and answer the following questions:

1. What is the most common medication that has been known to trigger manic episodes?

The most common medication that has been known to trigger manic episodes are steroids that are frequently used to treat chronic illnesses such as MS and systemic lupus erythematosus.

2. What is the speech pattern of a person experiencing a manic episode?

The speech pattern of a person experiencing a manic episode will have increased motor activity. They are extroverted and sociable while attracting lots of acquaintances. They talk and laugh a lot, often very loud and inappropriate.

3. What is the difference between cyclothymic disorder and bipolar disorder?

Bipolar disorder is manifested by cycles of mania that are followed by states of depression. Cyclothymic disorder is a chronic mood disturbance of at least 2 years, but the periods of elevated mood are hypomanic symptoms and depressed mood is insufficient in severity or duration to meet criteria for major depressive episode, and the person is never without symptoms for longer than 2 months at a time.

4. Why should a person on lithium therapy have blood levels drawn regularly?

A person who is on lithium therapy should have blood levels drawn regularly to make sure that they are in the therapeutic range of the drug which is 0.6-1.2 mEq/L. This drug has a thin therapeutic range and levels above 1.2 mEq/L can have toxic side effects and can potentially be fatal, so it is important to monitor this closely.

5. There is a narrow margin between the therapeutic and toxic serum levels of lithium carbonate. What is the therapeutic range? What are the initial signs and symptoms of lithium toxicity?

The therapeutic range of lithium is 0.6-1.2 mEq/L. The initial signs and symptoms of lithium toxicity are increased nausea, anorexia, diarrhea and even CNS symptoms such as muscle weakness, drowsiness, ataxia, tremors, and muscle twitching.

6. Describe some nursing implications for the client on lithium therapy.

When a patient is first started on lithium therapy it is important for the nurse to educate the patient to report all medications, herbals, and caffeine use to their physician so they can evaluate for any possible drug reactions. Encourage the patient to drink plenty of fluids, about 2000-3000mL a day and to avoid exercises that involve excessive sweating because fluid loss can impact lithium levels. Also, it is important to educate the patient on the importance of lithium monitoring levels and that blood must be drawn 12 hours after the last dose. Initially the serum blood draws will need to be done 1-2 times a week until it becomes stable and then once a month. Education on if they are experiencing nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea to contact their doctor as this could also affect the lithium level.