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50pc of bipolar disorder patients suffer work, social or family disabilities

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A study conducted at the University of Granada has found that 50 pc of patients with bipolar disorder suffer some type of work, social and family disability, and approximately 20 pc present some disorder at the three levels.

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The research study analyzed the factors associated to higher work, social and family disabilities in a sample of 108 patients suffering from bipolar disorder.

This research revealed that work disability –that is, difficulty to perform normal job duties– in these patients was associated to high recurrence of maniac episodes, as well as to recurrent psychiatric hospitalization –high-intensity episodes–, depression and low educational levels. Furthermore, nicotinic dependency –strong addiction to tobacco– can be more disabling in patients with bipolar disorder than depression.

Luis Gutiérrez Rojas, a member of the Research Group of Psychiatry Research and Neuroscience of the University of Granada states that social disability –difficulty to establish relations out of the family and to achieve social integration– in these patients is associated to higher hospitalization rates, episodes of depression and active depression symptoms.

“Receiving social support is associated to lower social disability in these patients,” said the author.

The University of Granada researcher added that, to avoid disability in patients with bipolar disorder “recurrence of depressive and maniac episodes must be avoided, and physicians should treat these episodes promptly to avoid hospitalization”.

Rojas stated that dependency to tobacco –apart from serious physical sequels– is associated to a worse bipolar disorder prognosis. Simultaneously, social support should be improved or sought for patients deprived of it.

Alcoholism is especially conflictive at family level, and alcohol is the most abused substance in patients with bipolar disorder.

“Detecting alcohol abuse in patients is specially important to improve family relations,” added author.

The study has been published in the prestigious journal Psychiatry Research.

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