Gambling Problems Associated with Bipolar Type 2 Disorder

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By Mark L. Fuerst [2]

A study from the UK found that patients with bipolar type 2 disorder were at significantly higher risk of problem gambling than those with bipolar type 1 disorder.

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Bipolar disorder is associated with elevated rates of problem gambling. Mood disturbances, such as hypomanic experiences, are also associated with elevated rates of gambling problem symptoms. However, little is known about rates in the different presentations of bipolar illness.

The present authors set out to determine the prevalence and distribution of problem gambling in people with bipolar disorder in the United Kingdom. They used the Problem Gambling Severity Index to measure gambling problems in 635 bipolar disorder patients, with a particular focus on those with bipolar type 2 disorder.

The results show that moderate to severe gambling problems were 4 times higher in people with bipolar disorder than in the general population, and were associated with type 2 disorder, history of suicidal ideation or attempt, and rapid cycling.

The major finding, the authors state, is that those with a diagnosis of type 2 bipolar disorder were at significantly higher risk of gambling problems than those with a diagnosis of bipolar type 1 disorder. The data suggest that mild mood elevation involving enhanced reward focus, sleeplessness, and distractibility constitute particular risk factors for a gambling problem among these patients.

In this study, patients with bipolar disorder who were at risk of problem gambling were likely to be younger and to have an earlier illness onset than patients at low risk, and also were more likely to work in service industries or to be unemployed. In contrast to previous studies in the general population and in bipolar disorder, there was not a higher prevalence of problem gambling in men compared with women.

In conclusion, the authors state that about 1 in 10 patients with bipolar disorder may be at moderate to severe risk of problem gambling, possibly associated with suicidal behavior and a course of rapid cycling. With elevated rates of gambling problems in bipolar type 2 disorder, they recommend that clinicians routinely assessing gambling problems in these bipolar disorder patients.

RESULT: Gambling problems in bipolar disorder in the UK: prevalence and distribution. British Journal of Psychiatry | Oct 1, 2015 (FREE FULL TEXT)

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