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DO PATIENTS WITH BIPOLAR DISORDERS RECEIVE EVIDENCE-BASED PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS? A SURVEY IN ITALY

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**Introduction:** Research evidence on bipolar disorder supports the importance of patients' active role to improve outcome and the efficacy of a number of psychosocial interventions. The lower cost and potential ease of dissemination of group psychoeducation suggest that this should be a first line approach, with more complex interventions, requiring highly specialized skills, reserved to selected patients. However, to what extent research models can be transferred to everyday practice remains to be seen.

**Objectives:** To explore the delivery of psychosocial interventions to bipolar disorders patients in routine mental health care.

**Aims:** To estimate the treated prevalence of bipolar disorders in Milan and to collect data about the variety of psychosocial interventions patients received by mental health services.

**Methods:** A survey of psychosocial interventions received by bipolar patients in three mental health services of Milan (catchment area 867,000 inhabitants) was conducted in 2009. Data from the Regional Mental Health Information System were retrieved to calculate the number of patients involved in psychosocial interventions and the kind of intervention provided.

**Results:** The treated prevalence rate was low, showing a probable treatment gap. Only 20% of 636 bipolar patients received at least one psychosocial intervention. The interventions provided were: family psychoeducation (3,8%), individual social skills training (11,5%), group social skills training (1,4%), and relatives group (3,0%).

**Conclusions:** Few bipolar patients receive psychosocial interventions in the MHS of Milan.

Moreover, the interventions received were not specifically designed for bipolar disorder.

Treatment gap could be reduced providing psychoeducation especially designed for bipolar patients.