

Mood swings of bipolar patients can be predicted, study shows

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The future mood swings of people with bipolar disorder can be predicted by their current thoughts and behaviour, a study published today (Tuesday) has found.

Psychologists from the Universities of Manchester and Lancaster say their findings are important because they mean talking therapies, like [cognitive behavioural therapy](#) (CBT), could prove effective treatments for the condition.

People with bipolar are prone to extreme mood swings that take them from great emotional highs to the pits of [depression](#); the cause of these mood swings is often put down to the patients' [genes](#) and biology rather than their own thoughts and actions.

For this latest study – published in the American Psychological Association journal *Psychological Assessment* – the researchers followed 50 people with [bipolar disorder](#) for a month. The team found that the patients' thinking and behaviour predicted their future mood swings even when their medical history had been accounted for.

"Individuals who believed extreme things about their moods – for example that their moods were completely out of their own control or that they had to keep active all the time to prevent becoming a failure – developed more mood problems in a month's time," said study lead Dr Warren Mansell, in Manchester's School of Psychological Sciences.

"In contrast, people with bipolar disorder who could let their moods pass as a normal reaction to stress or knew they could manage their mood, fared well a month later. These findings are encouraging for talking therapies – such as CBT – that aim to help patients to talk about their moods and change their thinking about them."

A new form of CBT, known as TEAMS (Think Effectively About [Mood Swings](#)), is being developed by Dr Mansell and colleagues, at The University of Manchester. It aims to improve on previous therapies by focusing on current problems, like depression, anxiety and irritability, and helping patients to set goals for their life as a whole.

The aim of this new approach is to encourage patients to accept and manage a range of normal emotions – like joy, anger and fear – and a controlled trial is about to start following a successful case series of the TEAMS approach.

The researchers will use the TEAMS approach to follow up their current findings with a larger study that identifies who relapses and who heads towards recovery in the long term.

More information: 'Extreme Appraisals of Internal States and Bipolar Symptoms: The Hypomanic Attitudes and Positive Predictions Inventory,' published in the ASA's Psychological Assessment journal.

Provided by University of Manchester

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