

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUICIDAL ATTEMPTS IN BIPOLAR DISORDER: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SUBTYPES 1 AND 2

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Background: Suicidal behaviour represents a main cause of morbidity in patients with bipolar disorder. Researchers estimate that between 25% and 60% of individuals with bipolar disorder will attempt suicide at least once in their lives. Although it remains a controversial issue, several studies have found that patients with bipolar-II disorder have a higher risk of suicide attempt than those with bipolar-I.

Aim: To investigate whether bipolar II disorder has different characteristics from bipolar I disorder among suicide attempters.

Methods: 311 patients suffering from bipolar disorder, hospitalized after a suicide attempt, were interviewed by semi-structured interview, suicide attempt characteristics and a wide range of personality traits relevant to suicidal vulnerability.

Results: There was no significant difference between BP-I and BP-II suicide attempters according to sociodemographic variables. BP-I and BP-II patients did not differ for intent and lethality of suicide attempt for both BP subtypes. There was no significant difference for other characteristics of suicide behavior such as number of previous attempts, age at first suicide attempt, use of violent mean. Personality traits such as impulsivity, aggression, emotional lability, and hopelessness were similar between BP-I and BP-II patients. There was no significant difference between the groups in rates of comorbid substance abuse, anxious disorder or eating disorder.

Limitations: Retrospective study, lack of information about number of previous episodes and severity of acute episode of the bipolar disorder.

Conclusion: BP-I and BP-II subtypes have similar features of suicide attempt and personality traits relevant to suicidal risk.