Bipolar Disorders Program

Bipolar disorder, also known as manic-depressive illness, is a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. People with bipolar disorder experience periods of unusually intense emotion, changes in sleep patterns and activity levels, and unusual behaviors. These distinct periods are called mood episodes. Mood episodes are drastically different from the moods and behaviors that are typical for the person. Extreme changes in energy, activity, and sleep go along with mood episodes.

The UCSF Bipolar Disorders Program consists of the Bipolar Clinic and Group Psychotherapy. The Bipolar Clinic is a teaching clinic at UCSF. All persons seen in our clinic are primarily managed by psychiatry residents, with close attending supervision. We have a very limited number of slots to accept new patients for ongoing treatment and management. We also offer consultations and second opinions for individuals who are referred by their psychiatrists.

We also offer psychoeducational group psychotherapy. Members must be referred by their psychiatrist. This time-limited eight-week psychotherapy is conducted in a classroom-like setting where the focus is on developing a culture of learning. Topics include:

- Self-awareness and mood charting
- Review of medications
- Sleep management
- Communication skills
- Stigma
- Impact of drugs and alcohol on mood
- Preventing mood episodes

Individuals in our program often appreciate meeting with peers and sharing management tips with others who have had similar experiences. For graduates of the bipolar psychoeducational group, there is an alumni group that meets monthly.

At present, our principal missions are in the areas of clinical service and education. The demand for clinical services is far greater than our ability to provide clinical services. We are always considering ways in which to expand clinical services given current constraints.

Insurance coverage
Our services are generally covered by most insurance providers. However, please be aware that UCSF Health may not be contracted with your specific insurance provider. You will need to give us your insurance information when scheduling your first appointment so we can check your insurance coverage and provide an estimated cost for treatment services.

**Referrals for appointments**

- **For ongoing treatment**: Contact our intake office at (415) 476-7000. *Please note that these openings are extremely limited.*
- **For second opinions or consultations**: Contact our intake office at (415) 476-7000. Additionally, your primary psychiatrist should call and provide us with a brief description of your condition, diagnosis, reason for consultation, medication history, and any other special information.
- **For the psychotherapy group**: Referring psychiatrists should contact program director Descartes Li, MD, directly at descartes.li@ucsf.edu or (415) 476-7448. *Please note that email is not confidential. We suggest sending a brief email or leaving a message with your email address so our staff can contact you via a secure messaging system.*