Treatment of Bipolar Disorders with Second Generation Antipsychotic Medications

Marek Jarema
Ljubomir Hotujac
E. Timucin Oral
Janusz Rybakowski
Norman Sartorius
Jaromir Švestka
The recognition, diagnosis and treatment of bipolar disorders (BD) is a major task for public health and for mental health authorities. Bipolar disorders are among the most common mental disorders with a prevalence estimated at 1.5% of the adult population. When the whole spectrum of bipolar disorders including their sub-threshold forms are taken into consideration, the rate of BD has been estimated by some authors to be as high as 6%. The fact that BDs are recurrent makes the provision of effective and well-tolerated treatment to those suffering from these disorders even more important.

Pharmacological treatment is central to the care of patients suffering from BD. Ideally, such treatment should rely on drugs that have few if any side effects and which are:

- effective in the treatment of acute manic symptoms and syndromes
- effective in the treatment of bipolar depression
- effective in the maintenance treatment of BD

As none of the currently available mood-stabilizers fulfill all of these criteria, clinicians have welcomed the results of studies that showed that second generation antipsychotic medications (SGAMs) can be useful in the treatment of various forms of bipolar disorders.

This review focuses on the evidence of the effects of SGAMs on BD. It is presented fully cognizant of the fact that the treatment of people with BD is a complex process that involves the participation of patients, their families and health and other social service workers. Psychopharmacotherapy plays an important role in this process, but should be seen as a part of the total treatment plan rather than as being sufficient by itself.