

**Ball, J., Mitchell, P., Malhi, G., Skillecorn, A. & Smith, M. (2003). Schema-focused cognitive therapy for bipolar disorder: reducing vulnerability to relapse through attitudinal change. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 37(1), 41-48.**

*Objective:* Acceptance of, and adaptability to illness, are major determinants of adherence to treatment and functional recovery. This paper addresses the major psychosocial factors associated with bipolar disorder and the role of psychological interventions in symptom management and adaptability to the illness experience. A new model is presented highlighting the role of developmental experiences and temperament in determining reactions to bipolar disorder. The authors propose that by addressing reactions to the illness experiences and effects on self-concept through schema-focused cognitive therapy, functional recovery is more likely to occur among those patients functioning below expectation.

*Method:* A systematic review of the current literature including an Index Medicus/MEDLINE search was conducted, focusing on risk factors, cognitive vulnerabilities and triggers associated with bipolar disorder. Psychological treatments available for the treatment of bipolar disorder are reviewed and details of a novel schema-focused cognitive model for this condition are presented. Traditional models of adaptation to chronic illness are outlined and incorporated into the proposed model. Schema-focused cognitive therapy is proposed as an approach to help patients reduce cognitive vulnerability to relapse in addition to adopting effective mood management strategies.

*Results and Conclusions:* There is a need for psychological treatments which reduce the risks associated with poor functionality in patients with bipolar disorder. Schema-focused cognitive therapy specifically targets the temperament, developmental experiences and cognitive vulnerabilities that determine adjustment to illness. This proposed treatment, combined with pharmacotherapy, may offer new psychotherapeutic options for the future.