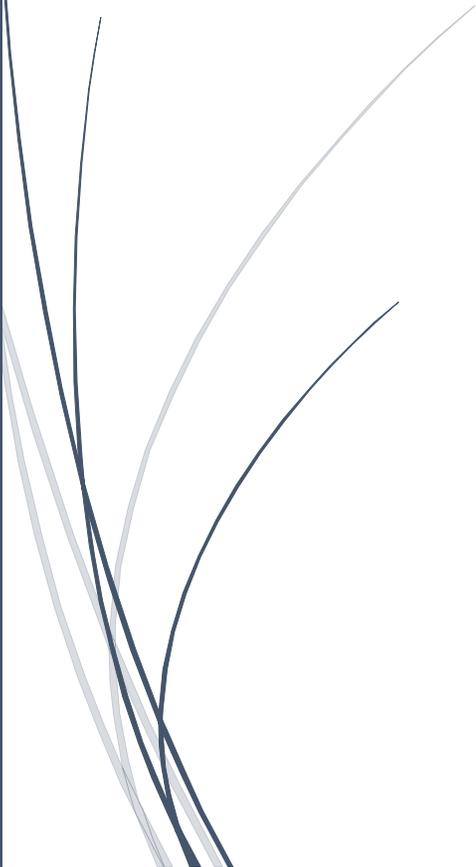




# CANAM INTERVENTIONS

Mental Illness



### **What is Mental Illness?**

Mental illness is an illness that affects or is manifested in a person's brain. It may impact on the way a person thinks, behaves, and interacts with other people. It is common that mental illness and drug addiction go hand in hand.

The term "mental illness" actually encompasses numerous psychiatric disorders, and just like illnesses that affect other parts of the body, they can vary in severity. Many people suffering from mental illness may not look as though they are ill or that something is wrong, while others may appear to be confused, agitated, or withdrawn.

"It is a myth that mental illness is a weakness or defect in character and that sufferer can get better simply by 'pulling themselves up by their bootstraps'. Mental illnesses are real illnesses--as real as heart disease and cancer--and they require and respond well to treatment".

### **What is Bipolar Disorder?**

Bipolar Disorder and Risk for Suicide

[Information taken from: HealthyPlace.com](http://HealthyPlace.com)

It is important to note that an estimated 15% to 20% of patients who suffer from bipolar disorder and who do not receive medical attention commit suicide. The risk is greater in the following individuals:

- In a 2001 study of bipolar disorder I disorder, more than 50% of patients attempted suicide; the risk was highest during depressive episodes.
- Some studies have suggested that the risk with bipolar disorder II patients is even higher than it is in patients with bipolar disorder I or major depression disorder.
- Patients with mixed mania, and possibly when it is marked by irritability and paranoia, are also at Many young pre- and early adolescent children with bipolar disorder are more severely ill than are adults with the disease. According to a 2001 study, 25% of children with bipolar disorder are seriously suicidal. They have a higher risk for mixed mania (simultaneous depression and mania), multiple and frequent cycles, and a long duration of illness without well periods.

Rapid cycling, although a more severe bipolar disorder variation does not appear to increase the suicide risk for patients with bipolar disorder.

Thinking and Memory Problems in Those with Bipolar Disorder: A 2000 study reported that bipolar disorder patients had varying degrees of problems with short- and long-term memory, speed of information processing, and mental flexibility. Medications used for bipolar disorder, however, could have been responsible for some of these abnormalities and more research is needed to confirm or refute these findings.

### **Behavioral and Emotional Effects of Manic Phases on the Patient:**

A small percentage of bipolar disorder patients demonstrate heightened productivity or creativity during manic phases. More often, however, the distorted thinking and impaired judgment that are characteristic of manic episodes can lead to dangerous behavior, including the following:

- A person may spend money with abandon, causing financial ruin in some cases.
- Angry, paranoid, and even violent behaviors are not uncommon during a manic episode.
- Some people are openly promiscuous.
- Some people hide behind drug use to cope with the illness.
- Some people self-medicate.
- Some people run away from families and live in poverty areas.

Often such behaviours are followed by low self-esteem and guilt, which are experienced during the depressed phases. During all stages of the illness, patients need to be reminded that the mood disturbance will pass and that its severity can be diminished by treatment.

### **Bipolar Disorder and Substance Abuse:**

Cigarette smoking is prevalent among bipolar patients, particularly those who have frequent or severe psychotic symptoms. Some experts speculate that, as in schizophrenia, nicotine use may be a form of self-medication because of its specific effects on the brain; further research is necessary.

Up to 60% of patients with bipolar disorder abuse other substances (most commonly alcohol, followed by marijuana or cocaine) at some point in the course of their illness.

The following are risk factors for alcoholism and substance abuse in bipolar disorder patients:

- Having mixed-state episodes rather than ones of pure mania.
- Being a man with bipolar disorder

### **What is Schizophrenia?**

[Information taken from: HealthyPlace.com](http://HealthyPlace.com)

One of the most stigmatized and debilitating mental illnesses is Schizophrenia. Though it has a specific set of symptoms, Schizophrenia varies in its severity from individual to individual, and even within any one afflicted individual from one time period to another.

The symptoms of schizophrenia generally can be controlled with treatment and, in more than 50 percent of individuals given access to continuous schizophrenia treatment and rehabilitation over many years, recovery is often possible. Though researchers and mental health professionals don't know what causes schizophrenia, they have developed treatments that allow most persons with schizophrenia to work live with their families and enjoy friends. But like those with diabetes, people with schizophrenia probably will be under medical care for the rest of their lives.

### **Symptoms of Schizophrenia:**

Generally, schizophrenia begins during adolescence or young adulthood.

The symptoms of schizophrenia appear gradually and family and friends may not notice them as the illness takes initial hold. Often, the young man or woman feels tense, can't concentrate or sleep, and withdraws socially. But at some point, loved ones realize the patient's personality has changed. Work performance, appearance and social relationships may begin to deteriorate.

### **What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?**

*[Information taken from: HealthyPlace.com](http://HealthyPlace.com)*

(PTSD) Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a severe reaction to an extremely traumatic event. The person can actually experience the event (i.e. be in a plane crash) or be a witness to the event (i.e. rescue worker at a plane crash).

Over time and with psychological help, some people learn to cope with the aftermath of the event. However, for others, symptoms such as flashbacks and depression can become worse, lasting a long period of time, and seriously disrupting the person's life.

Sometimes symptoms do not begin until many months or even years after the traumatic event took place. If post-traumatic stress disorder has been present for 3 months or longer, it is considered chronic.

PTSD is an anxiety disorder which can affect both children and adults. About 7% of the population will develop PTSD in their lifetime; 5 million adults in the U.S. have PTSD during any given year.

### **What is Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD)?**

About 16 million Americans or 8-percent of the population have Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder, making it one of the most prevalent personality disorders in the U.S. Rigid adherence to rules and regulations and an overwhelming need for order and personal control are the primary characteristics of obsessive compulsive personality disorder. People living with OCPD are inflexible, perfectionists and unwilling to yield responsibilities to others. They are reliable, dependable, orderly, and methodical, but their inflexibility makes them unable to adapt to change. Because they are cautious and weigh all aspects of a problem, they have difficulty making decisions.

According to the Merck Manual, "people with an obsessive-compulsive personality are often high achievers, especially in the sciences and other intellectually demanding fields that require order and attention to detail. However, their responsibilities make them so anxious that they can rarely enjoy their successes." They are uncomfortable with their feelings, with relationships, and with situations in which they lack control or must rely on others or in which events are unpredictable.

Many people confuse Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder (OCPD) with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). The two disorders are not related. People with OCD are often aware that their obsessions are abnormal, but are compelled to perform them anyway. People with obsessive compulsive personality disorder, however, believe their need for strict order and rules is perfectly normal.

### **What are Eating Disorders?**

*[Information taken from: HealthyPlace.com](http://HealthyPlace.com)*

Eating Disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder include extreme emotions, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding weight and food issues. They are serious emotional and physical problems that can have life-threatening consequences for both females and males.

### **What is Anorexia Nervosa?**

Anorexia Nervosa is characterized by self-starvation and excessive weight loss.

Symptoms include:

- Refusal to maintain body weight at or above a minimally normal weight for height, body type, age, and activity level
- Intense fear of weight gain or being "fat"
- Feeling "fat" or overweight despite dramatic weight loss
- Loss of menstrual periods
- Extreme concern with body weight and shape

### **What is Bulimia Nervosa?**

Bulimia Nervosa is characterized by a secretive cycle of binge-eating followed by purging. Bulimia includes eating large amounts of food, more than most people would eat in one meal, in short periods of time, then getting rid of the food and calories through vomiting, laxative abuse, or over-exercising.

Symptoms include:

- Repeated episodes of bingeing and purging
- Feeling out of control during a binge and eating beyond the point of comfortable fullness
- Purging after a binge, (typically by self-induced vomiting, abuse of laxatives, diet pills and/or diuretics, excessive exercise, or fasting)
- Frequent dieting
- Extreme concern with body weight and shape

What is Binge Eating Disorder?

Binge Eating Disorder (also known as compulsive overeating) is characterized primarily by periods of uncontrolled, impulsive, or continuous eating beyond the point of feeling comfortably full. While there is no purging, there may be sporadic fasts or repetitive diets and often feelings of shame or self-hatred after a binge. People who overeat compulsively may struggle with anxiety, depression, and loneliness, which can contribute to their unhealthy episodes of binge eating. Body weight may vary from normal to mild, moderate, or severe obesity.

### **Other Eating Disorders:**

Other eating disorders can include some combination of the signs and symptoms of anorexia, bulimia, and/or binge eating disorder. While these behaviors may not be clinically considered a full syndrome

eating disorder, they can still be physically dangerous and emotionally draining. All eating disorders require professional help.