Clinical practice guideline on pharmacological and psychological management of adult patients with bipolar disorder and comorbid substance use

Guía de práctica clínica para el tratamiento farmacológico y psicológico de los pacientes adultos con trastorno bipolar y un diagnóstico comórbido de trastorno por uso de sustancias


1 These authors have equally contributed to this work.
* Instituto de Investigación Sanitaria BIOARABA. OSI Araba. Hospital Universitario. CIBERSAM, UPV/EHU Vitoria, Spain.
** Hospital Clinic, Institut d’Investigacions Biomèdiques August Pi i Sunyer (IDIBAPS). Universitat de Barcelona, CIBERSAM, Spain.
*** Servicio de Psiquiatría. EOXI de Santiago de Compostela, Spain.
**** Parc Sanitari Sant Joan de Deu, Universitat de Barcelona, CIBERSAM, Barcelona, Spain.
***** Grupo de investigación TransLab, Departamento de Ciencias Médicas, Universitat de Girona, Spain.
****** Unidad de Tabaquismo y Trastornos Adictivos. Facultad de Psicología. Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, Spain.
******* Institut de Neuropsiquiatria i Addiccions (INAD). Parc de Salut Mar, RTA, Barcelona, Spain.
******** Universidad de Oviedo, CIBERSAM. Instituto de Investigación Sanitaria del Principado de Asturias (ISPA), Servicio de Salud del Principado de Asturias (SESA), Oviedo, Spain.
********** Unidad de Conductas Adictivas, Complejo Hospitalario de Ourense, CIBERSAM, Ourense, Spain.

Abstract

This review synthesizes the pharmacological and psychosocial interventions that have been conducted in comorbid bipolar disorder (BD) and substance use disorders (SUDs) while also providing clinical recommendations about which intervention elements are helpful for addressing substance use versus mood symptoms in patients with these co-occurring conditions. The best evidence from randomized controlled trials was used to evaluate treatment options. The strength of recommendations was described using the GRADE approach. Very few of the randomized trials performed so far have provided consistent evidence for the management of both mood symptoms and substance use in patients with a BD. No clinical trials are available for bipolar patients using cannabis. Some treatments have shown benefit for mood symptoms without benefits for alcohol or illicit substance use. Our results suggest that 1) we can (weakly) recommend the use of adjuvant valproate or naltrexone to improve symptoms of alcohol use disorder; 2) Lamotrigine add-on therapy seems to reduce cocaine-related symptoms and is therefore recommended (moderate strength); and 3) Varenicline is (weakly) recommended to improve nicotine abstinence. Integrated group therapy is the most well validated and efficacious approach on substance use outcomes if substance use is targeted in an initial treatment phase.

Key words: Bipolar disorder; substance use; alcohol; cocaine; methamphetamine; psychostimulant; nicotine.

Resumen

Esta revisión resume las intervenciones farmacológicos y psicosociales que se han realizado en trastorno bipolar (TB) y un diagnóstico comórbido de trastorno por uso de sustancias (TUS) y además proporciona recomendaciones clínicas respecto de cuáles elementos de intervención son útiles para hacer frente a los síntomas del uso de sustancias versus los síntomas de estado de ánimo en pacientes con estas afecciones concurrentes. Se utilizó la mejor evidencia de ensayos realizados para evaluar las opciones de tratamiento. La fuerza de las recomendaciones se describió mediante el enfoque GRADE. Muy pocos de los ensayos aleatorizados realizados hasta la fecha han proporcionado evidencia consistente para el manejo tanto de los síntomas de estado de ánimo como del uso de sustancias en pacientes con TB. No hay disponibilidad de ensayos clínicos para pacientes con TB que utilicen el cannabis. Algunos tratamientos han mostrado beneficios para los síntomas de estado de ánimo sin beneficios para el uso de alcohol o sustancias ilícitas. Nuestros resultados sugieren que 1) podemos (débilmente) recomendar el uso de ácido valproico o naltrexona adyuvante para aliviar los síntomas del trastorno por consumo de alcohol; 2) el tratamiento complementario con lamotrigina parece reducir los síntomas relacionados con la cocaína y, por tanto, es recomendable (fuerza moderada); y 3) la vareniclina es recomendable (débilmente) para mejorar la abstinencia de la nicotina. La terapia grupal integrada es el enfoque con más validación y eficacia sobre los resultados en el uso de sustancias cuando este uso es abordado durante la fase inicial de tratamiento.

Palabras clave: Trastorno bipolar; uso de sustancias; alcohol; cocaína; metanfetaminas; psicoestimulantes; nicotina.

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Send correspondence to: Iñaki Zorrilla. Hospital Universitario Araba. UPV/EHU. CIBERSAM G10. Olaiguibel 29, 01004, Vitoria, Spain.
Email: i.zorrilla@gmail.com

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he prevalence of bipolar disorder (BD) I and II is 1.1% and 1.2% respectively (Clemente et al., 2015). In these patients, drugs of abuse consumption or dependence are frequent comorbidities. According to the 2002 National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions, the lifetime prevalence of comorbid alcohol use disorder and substance use disorder (SUD) in patients with bipolar I disorder was 58% and 38%, respectively (Grant et al., 2005). In the Epidemiological Catchment Area (ECA) study in which the lifetime prevalence of concurrent mental illness and SUD in 20,291 subjects was examined, history of SUD was present in 60.7% of patients with BD I and in 48% of those with BD II (Regier et al., 1990). Using data of the ECA survey, psychiatric diagnosis of mania was more likely to occur in alcohol abusers than in non-alcohol abusers (Odds Ratio, OR, 6.2) (Helzer & Pryzbeck, 1988). Tobacco consumption is the main preventable factor of mortality in smokers with BD, and any possible solutions are often blocked by prejudices over desire, and the possibilities and risks for these patients in giving up tobacco consumption (González-Pinto et al., 1998; Sarramea et al., 2019).

There is a large body of evidence indicating the clinical deleterious effects of comorbid SUD on BD and vice versa, including a high rate of relapse, slower recovery from episodes (González-Pinto et al., 2010), high impulsivity, poor adherence and response to treatment, higher risk for mixed episodes and suicide (González-Pinto et al., 2011a), higher need of hospitalization, poorer functioning, and higher neuropsychological impact (Balanža-Martínez, Crespo-Facorro, González-Pinto & Vieta, 2015; Colom, Vieta, Daban, Pacchiarotti & Sánchez-Moreno, 2006; Merikangas et al., 2007; Oquendo et al., 2010). In a naturalistic sample of BD I patients in which 10-year outcomes were examined, mixed-episode patients with alcohol or other substance use had an increased risk of hospitalization and suicidality compared with the non-mixed group (González-Pinto et al., 2010).

Given its prevalence and impact on public health, the comorbidity of BD and substance use disorders is one of the most relevant of dual diagnoses (Arias et al., 2017). So far, there is little information of the efficacy and safety of psychoactive drugs in dual diagnosis bipolar patients obtained from randomized controlled trials (RCTs) due to methodological difficulties, clinical complexity of the disorders, multiple associated variables and comorbidities. In this context, there is an increasing need for evidence-based recommendations for clinical decision-making in BD and co-occurring SUD.

Although several reviews and meta-analysis have reported outcomes of interventions in patients with BD and co-occurring SUD (Gold et al., 2018; Messer, Lammers, Müller-Siecheneder, Schmidt & Latifi, 2017; Post & Kalivas, 2013; Vornik & Brown, 2006; Yatham et al., 2018), to our knowledge, a clinical practice guideline with recommendations on the pharmacological and psychological management of these patients is lacking. Therefore, the aim of the present guideline is to provide healthcare professionals involved in the care of patients with dual diagnosis with clinical recommendations based on scientific evidence to assist in the decision-making process of their clinical practice.

Methods

Formulation of clinical questions

In accordance with evidence-based medicine principles, we used the ‘PICO’ structure (Patient-Intervention-Comparison-Outcomes [Oxman, Schünemann & Fretheim, 2006; Schünemann et al., 2008]) to formulate the following review question: “What is the effect of a pharmacological and/or psychological intervention for the treatment of adult patients with a BD and a SUD?”. Patients older than 18 years diagnosed with a BD and a SUD (including cannabis, cocaine, alcohol and/or nicotine) were the target population of this clinical guideline. Opioid use disorder was not included because no systematic reviews with or without meta-analysis or randomized clinical trials were found.

Bibliographic search

We performed a comprehensive literature search in MEDLINE, PsycINFO, Embase, Scopus, Web of Science, Cochrane Library and Pubmed until May 2018. The following search terms were used:

Evaluation of the quality of the evidence and formulation of recommendations

Evaluation of the quality of studies and summary of the evidence for each question was performed following the recommendations of the GRADE (Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation) working group (www.gradeworkinggroup.org) (Guyatt et al., 2011). Each paper was read in detail and critically appraised according to GRADE, then discussed between authors, resulting in an overall quality assessment score, subsequently revised per individual outcome. The whole process ended up in a clinical recommendation which was rated according to its strength. For clarity purposes, recommendations are here divided according to substance.

External review and evaluation

The evidence was evaluated using the AGREE II (Appraisal of Guidelines for Research and Evaluation) instrument (www.agreecollaboration.org).

A more detailed information on the methodology can be found in a previous paper by our group (Arranz et al., 2022).

Results

Study selection

Figure 1 outlines PRISMA flowchart leading to the study selection. The search yielded 194 studies. 59 studies were deemed eligible for further assessment. The final selection included 13 studies. Open-label, cohort or case-control studies, cross-sectional and observational studies, case reports, letters, posters and abstracts of presentations to specialist meetings and conferences were not included in the Guideline. Only articles published in English were included. Data were extracted from the included studies using a predefined template and the quality of each study was assessed using standard criteria. A summarized report of these studies can be found in Tables 1 to 3.

Patients with BD and alcohol use

Details about included studies are shown in Table 1.

PICO question 1. Is adjuvant valproate therapy effective to reduce symptoms of BD, to reduce alcohol consumption or to improve pragmatic variables and functioning in patients with BD and alcohol consumption?

One randomized controlled trial (RCT) evaluated adjuvant valproate vs placebo administered for 24 weeks in 52 acutely ill patients with diagnosis of BD I and alcohol dependence (Salloum et al., 2005). Levels of manic symptoms decreased substantially in both treatment groups (78% in the valproate group, 80% in the placebo group). Bech-Rafaelsen Mania Scale (BRMS) scores decreased by approximately 60% (moderate quality of evidence). Likewise, remission for depression (25-item Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression, HAM-25) did not show significant differences between the study groups (moderate quality of evidence). The efficacy of valproate regarding alcohol use, heavy drinking days was reported by 44% of patients in the valproate group compared with 68% in the placebo group (low quality of evidence). Differences
in the percentage of heavy drinking days and drinks per heavy drinking day were not found. The valproate group had significantly fewer cumulative heavy drinking days compared with the placebo group (mean reduction 7.1 days) (low quality of evidence). Valproate also prolonged the time to relapse to sustained heavy drinking to 93 days compared with 62 days in the placebo group but differences were not significant (low quality of evidence). Differences in mean scores of Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF) scale between valproate and placebo were not found.

- **Recommendations**
  - In patients with BD and co-occurring alcohol abuse disorder, the use of adjuvant valproate can be recommended to reduce the number of heavy drinking days (weak recommendation).
  - According to the Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee of the European Medicine Agency, valproate should not be prescribed for women of childbearing age who are not enrolled in a pregnancy prevention program, nor used in pregnancy. This is because of risk of malformations and developmental problems in babies who are exposed to valproate in the womb (https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/medicines/human/referrals/valproate-related-substances).

**PICO question 2.** Is adjuvant quetiapine therapy effective to reduce symptoms of BD, to reduce alcohol consumption or to
### Table 1. Bipolar disorder and alcohol use disorder.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Follow-up</th>
<th>Outcome variables (Clinical, consumption and pragmatic)</th>
<th>Limitations and bias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Petrakis   | RCT    | Psychotic spectrum disorder                   | 1. NTX. Dose not reported.  
2. DIS 250 mg/day.  
3. NTX + DIS. Dose not indicated.  
4. DIS + placebo. Dose of 250 mg/day assumed.                          | N=66         | 12 weeks  | Primary variables were alcohol consumption:  
- weekly Timeline Follow-back Interview.  
- Caving: ODOS.  
- PANSS baseline and every 2 weeks.  
- Adverse effects: AIMS, SAS, BAS.  
- No differences observed in consumption, only improvement in depressive symptoms.  
- Some sample heterogeneity with a majority of patients (approx. 80%) in depressive episode, around 10% in euthymia, and slightly less than 10% in manic or mixed episode. This may explain the improvement in depression variables improve and not those of manic symptoms.  
- The procedure for slow titration is described in detail. No data, however, on the actual final dose, mean dose, dropouts.  
- Complex statistical analysis: random regression analysis.  
- 50% of those on QUET and 68% of those on placebo were not taking any concomitant medication. | - Small sample.  
- No sub-analysis by diagnostic group. Since BD is the main one, all results assumed to be for this diagnosis, with the subsequent biases.  
- The two groups of DIS are open, not blind.  
- Post hoc analysis by Petrakis et al., Biol Psychiatry 2005. The article assesses the efficacy of the 4 lines of treatment in all patients with psychiatric disorders. In this article, the sample is subdivided into patients with psychotic and non-psychotic disorders and results are compared.  
- Four treatment groups. As analyses are performed in parts, the groups are repeated for each treatment, thus creating a bias of assigning greater weighting to these samples. |
| Salloum   | RCT    | Alcohol dependence and a concurrent affective episode of type I BD ( manic, mixed, or depressive) | 1. VAL 750 mg/day, increased as a function of tolerance to levels of 90-100 μg/ml  
2. Placebo  
Lithium in all patients, subsequently randomized to added treatment.  
- Rescue medication: PFZ, BZT, SERT, TRZ  
- Psychosocial intervention. | N=59         | 24 weeks  | Consumption variables: Time line follow-back method.  
- Proportion of days with high alcohol consumption (>4 SUDs for women and >5 SUDs for men).  
- Number of SUDs for each day of high consumption.  
- Proportion of days with alcohol consumption.  
- Number of SUDs for each day of alcohol consumption.  
- Time until relapse into continued high consumption  
Clinical variables:  
- Remission of mania (7 on BRMS)  
- Remission of depression (7 on HAM-25).  
- GGT and transaminase levels.  
- No concomitant psychotherapy or psychosocial treatment mentioned. |
| Brown     | RCT    | BD - type I (50/102) AND type II (52/102)  
AND alcohol abuse (3/102) in consumption during the 14 previous days | 1. QUET up to 600 mg/day  
2. Placebo  
50% of QUET and 68% of placebo were not taking any concomitant medication.  
Among those that did: Lithium 13.5% and 4% respectively  
AS 25% and 18%  
AD 38.5% and 28%  
No concomitant psychotherapy or psychosocial treatment mentioned. | N=102        | 12 weeks  | Consumption variables: Time line follow-back method.  
Caving: PACS.  
Affective variable: HAM-D, YMRS.  
Adverse effects of antipsychotics: AIMS, SAS, BAS.  
No concomitant psychotherapy or psychosocial treatment mentioned. |

**Notes:**  
- OUTPATIENT  
- ADDITIONALLY TREATED  
- RCT  
- Double-blind  
- Parallel Groups  
- Added treatment  
- 3 centres  
- Hospitalized (61%) and outpatient (39%).  
- Single centre  
- 6 centres  
- 3 centres  
- 2 centres  
- Single centre  
- Single centre  
- Single centre  
- Single centre  
- Single centre  
- Single centre  
- Single centre  
- Single centre  

**Outcome variables:**  
- Clinical, consumption and pragmatic  

**Limitations and bias:**  
- Small sample.  
- No sub-analysis by diagnostic group. Since BD is the main one, all results assumed to be for this diagnosis, with the subsequent biases.  
- The two groups of DIS are open, not blind.  
- Post hoc analysis by Petrakis et al., Biol Psychiatry 2005. The article assesses the efficacy of the 4 lines of treatment in all patients with psychiatric disorders. In this article, the sample is subdivided into patients with psychotic and non-psychotic disorders and results are compared.  
- Four treatment groups. As analyses are performed in parts, the groups are repeated for each treatment, thus creating a bias of assigning greater weighting to these samples.  

**Clinical variables:**  
- Remission of mania (7 on BRMS)  
- Remission of depression (7 on HAM-25).  
- GGT and transaminase levels.  

**Adverse effects:**  
- Hopkins Symptom Checklist.  
- AIMS, SAS, BAS.  

**Consumption variables:**  
- Time until relapse into continued high consumption  

**Affective variables:**  
- HAM-D, YMRS.  

**Adverse effects:**  
- AIMS, SAS, BAS.  

**Clinical variables:**  
- Remission of mania (7 on BRMS)  
- Remission of depression (7 on HAM-25).  
- GGT and transaminase levels.  

**Adverse effects:**  
- Hopkins Symptom Checklist.  
- AIMS, SAS, BAS.
### Table 1. (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
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<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Follow-up</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Outcome variables (Clinical, consumption and pragmatic)</th>
<th>Concomitant medication</th>
<th>Concomitant treatments</th>
<th>Limitations and bias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sherwood Browne 2009</td>
<td>BD</td>
<td>Double-blind Parallel groups</td>
<td>N=43</td>
<td>12 weeks</td>
<td>N=43</td>
<td>1. NTX 50 mg/day</td>
<td>Concomitant variables: Time line follow-back</td>
<td>- Severe depression/mixture of depressive mood</td>
<td>Moderate heterogeneity of concomitant treatments</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Placebo</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Placebo&gt;23</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Consumption variables:
- Days of consumption
- Days of high consumption
- Days of non-consumption
- Change in the number of days of high consumption
- Change in the number of days of non-consumption

#### Affective variables:
- YMRS, MADRS, CGI-S, CGI-I
- HAM-A

#### Other variables:
- Q-LES-Q, SDS

**Note.**
- BSCS: Brief Symptom Checklist; SAD: Schizoaffective Disorder; SAS: Schizophrenia; SP: Schizophrenia; TRZ: Trazodone; VAL: Valproate; YMRS: Young Mania Rating Scale.

**Abbreviations.**
- ACAM: Acamprosate; BD: Bipolar Disorder; BOG: Benzodiazepines; BSCS: Brief Symptom Checklist; CBT: Cognitive-behavioral therapy; CGI-I: Clinical Global Impression-Improvement; CGI-S: Clinical Global Impression-Severity; HAL: Haloperidol; HAM-A: Hamilton Rating Scale for Anxiety; HAM-25: 25-item Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression; LAM: Lamotrigine; OCD: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder; OXC: Oxcarbazepine; PACS: Penn Alcohol Craving Scale; PANSS: Psychotic Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale; Q-LES-Q: Quality of Life Enjoyment and Satisfaction Questionnaire; QUET: Quetiapine; RCT: Randomized Clinical Trial; SAD: Schizoaffective Disorder; SAS: Schizophrenia; SERT: Sertraline; SP: Schizophrenia; TRZ: Trazodone; VAL: Valproate; YMRS: Young Mania Rating Scale.
improve pragmatic variables and functioning in patients with BD and alcohol consumption?

Two 12-week randomized placebo-controlled studies evaluated adjuvant treatment with quetiapine in outpatients with BD (Sherwood Brown, Garza & Carmody, 2008; Stedman et al., 2010). In the outcome of improvement of symptoms including manic symptoms assessed with the Young Mania Rating Scale (YMRS), depressive symptoms with the 17-item Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression (HAM-D), anxiety symptoms with the Hamilton Rating Scale for Anxiety (HAM-A) and Clinical Global Impression (CGI), no significant differences between quetiapine and placebo were found (moderate quality of evidence). In all outcomes of alcohol consumption, such as percent of heavy drinking days, reduction of the number of drinking days per week, percent of alcohol abstinence days, reduction of the number of drinks per day, changes in alcohol craving scales, and decrease of Obsessive Compulsive Drinking and Abstinence Scale (OCDS) score differences between quetiapine and placebo were not statistically significant (low/moderate quality of evidence). On the other hand, differences in pragmatic and functioning variables assessed with the Quality of Life Enjoyment Questionnaire (Q-LES-Q) and Sheehan Disability Scale (SD) were not significant (moderate quality of evidence).

- **Recommendations**
  - In patients with BD and co-occurring alcohol abuse disorder, adjuvant quetiapine treatment cannot be recommended to improve clinical symptoms, to reduce alcohol use or to improve functioning.

**PICO question 3.** Is adjuvant treatment with acamprosate effective to reduce symptoms of BD, to reduce alcohol consumption or to improve pragmatic variables and functioning in patients with BD and alcohol consumption?

In one RCT, 30 adults meeting criteria for BD I or II and current alcohol dependence were randomized to receive add-on acamprosate or placebo while concurrently maintained on mood stabilizing medications (Tolliver, Desantis, Brown, Prisciandaro & Brady, 2012). Patients were followed for 8 weeks. Improvements in manic (YMRS) and depressive (Montgomery-Asberg Depression Rating Scale, MDRS) symptoms and changes in CGI scale were similar between the experimental and the control arms (very low quality of evidence). Statistically significant differences in the outcomes for assessing alcohol consumption (percent of abstinence days, percent of drinking days, reduction of OCDS score, gamma glutamyl-transferase levels (GGT) and CGI-substance scale score) were not found (very low quality of evidence).

- **Recommendations**
  - In patients with BD and co-occurring alcohol abuse disorder, adjuvant acamprosate therapy cannot be recommended to improve clinical symptoms, to reduce alcohol use or to improve functioning.

**PICO question 4.** Is adjuvant treatment with naltrexone effective to reduce symptoms of BD, to reduce alcohol consumption or to improve pragmatic variables and functioning in patients with BD and alcohol consumption?

In one RCT, 50 adult outpatients with BD I or II and current alcohol dependence with active alcohol use were randomized to 12 weeks of naltrexone (50 mg/day) add-on therapy or placebo (Sherwood Brown et al., 2009). Regarding manic symptoms, decrease of the YMRS score was significantly greater in the naltrexone group and regarding depressive symptoms, decrease of the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS) score was non significantly greater in the naltrexone group (very low quality of evidence). Statistically significant differences between naltrexone and placebo were found for the following alcohol outcome variables: zero drinking days at week 12 (33.1% vs 7.3%), reduction in the number of drinks per drinking day (63.4% vs 32.8%), reduction in GGT from baseline to week 12 (15.8% vs 3.7%), total abstinence days (12 times higher in the naltrexone group), and number of heavy drinking days (8.82 times lower in the naltrexone group) (very low/low quality of evidence). Differences between naltrexone and placebo in other variables, such as percentage of patients with zero drinking days, reduction of Penn Alcohol Craving Scale (PACS) craving scale at week 12, maximum number of consecutive days of abstinence, and final OCDS score were not found.

- **Recommendations**
  - In patients with BD and co-occurring alcohol abuse disorder, adjuvant treatment with naltrexone can be recommended to improve maniac or depressive symptoms cannot be recommended.
  - The use of adjuvant naltrexone to improve symptoms of alcohol abuse disorder can be recommended (weak recommendation).

**PICO question 5.** Is adjuvant treatment with disulfiram effective to reduce symptoms of BD, to reduce alcohol consumption or to improve pragmatic variables and functioning in patients with BD and alcohol consumption?

A 12-week RCT of 251 patients with major Axis I disorder (66 patients with psychotic spectrum disorder, 48 (73%) of which had BD) and alcohol dependence was identified (Petrakis, Nich & Ralevski, 2006). Randomization included open randomization to disulfiram 250 mg or no disulfiram and randomization to naltrexone 50 mg or placebo in a double-blind fashion, which resulted in the following
groups: naltrexone alone, placebo alone, disulfiram and naltrexone, or disulfiram and placebo. Primary outcomes were measures of alcohol use. There were no significant differences between disulfiram and placebo in maximum number of consecutive abstinent days, total days of abstinence, number of heavy drinking days (≥ 5 standard drinking units [SDU]), and OCDS score (very low quality of evidence).

- **Recommendations**
  - In patients with BD and co-occurring alcohol abuse disorder, the use of adjunct disulfiram to improve symptoms of alcohol dependence cannot be recommended.

**PICO question 6.** Is adjuvant treatment with disulfiram and naltrexone effective to reduce symptoms of BD, to reduce alcohol consumption or to improve pragmatic variables and functioning in patients with BD and alcohol consumption?

Data of the same RCT analysed for adjuvant disulfiram vs placebo on measures of alcohol use (Petrakis et al., 2006) was extracted to determine effectiveness of disulfiram and naltrexone vs placebo. Maximum consecutive days of abstinence was higher in the disulfiram and naltrexone group as compared with placebo (very low quality of evidence). However, results for total days of abstinence, number of days of heavy drinking days (≥ 5 SDU), and OCDS scores were similar (very low quality of evidence).

- **Recommendations**
  - In patients with BD and co-occurring alcohol abuse disorder, there is insufficient evidence to recommend the use of adjunct disulfiram and naltrexone to improve symptoms of alcohol abuse.

**PICO question 7.** Is adjuvant treatment with naltrexone vs disulfiram effective to reduce symptoms of BD, to reduce alcohol consumption or to improve pragmatic variables and functioning in patients with BD and alcohol consumption?

The comparison of the arms of naltrexone vs disulfiram of the aforementioned 12-week RCT of patients with BD and alcohol dependence (Petrakis et al., 2006), showed no significant differences between the two drugs in the outcomes of alcohol consumption, including total days of abstinence, number of heavy drinking days (≥ 5 SDU), and OCDS scores (very low quality of evidence).

- **Recommendations**
  - In patients with BD and co-occurring alcohol abuse disorder, the use of disulfiram over naltrexone and vice versa to improve symptoms of alcohol abuse cannot be recommended.

**PICO question 8.** Is adjuvant treatment with naltrexone vs disulfiram and naltrexone effective to reduce symptoms of BD, to reduce alcohol consumption or to improve pragmatic variables and functioning in patients with BD and alcohol consumption?

The comparison of the arms of naltrexone vs disulfiram combined with naltrexone in the 12-week RCT of patients with BD and comorbid alcohol dependence (Petrakis et al., 2006) did not show statistically significant differences for the outcome of alcohol consumption (maximum consecutive days of abstinence, total days of abstinence, number of heavy drinking days, and OCDS score) (very low quality of evidence).

- **Recommendations**
  - In patients with BD and co-occurring alcohol abuse disorder, the use of naltrexone vs disulfiram and naltrexone to improve symptoms of alcohol abuse cannot be recommended.

**PICO question 9.** Is adjuvant treatment with disulfiram vs disulfiram and naltrexone effective to reduce symptoms of BD, to reduce alcohol consumption or to improve pragmatic variables and functioning in patients with BD and alcohol consumption?

Based on data of the 12-week RCT of patients with BD and comorbid alcohol dependence (Petrakis et al., 2006), the comparison of the arms of disulfiram vs disulfiram plus naltrexone for improvement of alcohol consumption outcomes (maximum consecutive days of abstinence, total days of abstinence, number of heavy drinking days, and OCDS score) did not show statistically significant differences (very low quality of evidence).

- **Recommendations**
  - In patients with BD and co-occurring alcohol abuse disorder, the use of disulfiram vs disulfiram and naltrexone to improve symptoms of alcohol abuse cannot be recommended.

**Patients with BD and cocaine, methamphetamine or psychostimulant use**

Details about included studies are shown in Table 2.

**PICO question 10.** Is adjuvant treatment with citicoline effective to reduce symptoms of BD, to reduce cocaine consumption or to improve pragmatic variables and functioning in patients with BD and cocaine consumption?

The effectiveness of citicoline add-on therapy vs placebo in patients with BD and cocaine dependence was assessed in one 12-week trial conducted in 44 outpatients (depressive 22, maniac/hypomanic 17, euthymic 5) (Sherwood Brown, Gorman & Hynan, 2007). The primary outcome was to examine memory but mood and cocaine use were also assessed. Outcomes were measured with the Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology-Self-Report (IDS-SR), YMRS, cocaine urine testing, and the Rey Auditory Verbal Learning (RAVLT) instruments. Differences between the groups of citicoline and placebo in scores of depression or manic symptom scales were not found (very low quality of evidence). Regarding cocaine consumption, the group of citicoline showed an improvement of urine drug testing...
### Table 2. Bipolar Disorder and Stimulant Use Disorder.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>EXP(N)/ COMP(N)</th>
<th>Follow-up</th>
<th>Outcome variables (Clinical, consumption and pragmatic)</th>
<th>Limitations and bias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sherwood Brown 2007</td>
<td>RCT Double-blind Parallel groups Added treatment</td>
<td>Outpatient Single centre</td>
<td>BD I (35/44) BD II (3/44) AND Cocaine abuse or dependence, in early recovery (1-12 weeks abstinent). 17 in hypomania 22 in depression and 5 euthymics.</td>
<td>1. Citicoline 2000 mg/d (progressive titration reaching this dose in week 6) 2. Placebo</td>
<td>N=44 Citicoline=23 Placebo=21</td>
<td>Consumption variables:</td>
<td>- Small sample size. - Single centre. - Differences between groups despite randomization: more patients entered the depressive phase in the citicoline group than in the placebo group (35 vs 7). - Heterogeneity in affective state of the patients included. - The results are striking due to the clear and positive response, both in terms of consumption and in a cognitive variable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherwood Brown 2012</td>
<td>RCT Double-blind Parallel groups Added treatment</td>
<td>Outpatient Single centre</td>
<td>BD I (59/112) BD II (42/112) Non-specific BD (11/112 current depressive/mixed episode (90% entered depression) AND Cocaine dependence, with active use in the previous 14 days)</td>
<td>1. Lamotrigine 200 mg/day (standard titration) 2. Placebo</td>
<td>N=112 Lamotrigine=55 Placebo=57</td>
<td>Consumption variables: Timeline follow-back method. Main variable: Urinanalysis CCQ Affective variables: - HAM-D, QIDS-S, YMRS, PRD-III. Treatment variables: Adverse effects: PRD-III Pill count.</td>
<td>- Single centre. - 70% use cocaine in the form of &quot;Cash&quot;. - Randomization and calculation of the sample size are properly specified. - Many patients did not receive basic treatment for BD, and in particular, low number of patients receiving lithium or PC. - Complex statistical analysis: random regression analysis. - The positive result is in a secondary variable (spending on cocaine) reported by the patient. However, the main variable and the affective variables were not positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherwood Brown 2012</td>
<td>RCT Double-blind Parallel groups Added treatment</td>
<td>Outpatient Single centre</td>
<td>BD I (6/48) BD II (4/48) Non-specific BD (7/48), current depressive/mixed episode MMD (31/48) AND Methamphetamine dependence, with use in the previous 2 weeks.</td>
<td>1. Citicoline 2000 mg/d (in progressive titration in 6 weeks). 2. Placebo</td>
<td>N = 48 Citicoline = 28 Placebo = 20</td>
<td>Consumption variables:</td>
<td>- Small sample size. - Single centre. - Very important limitation: Only 1/3 of the sample with BD. - High dropout rate, although higher in placebo group (14% of placebo and 41% of citicoline completed). - Citicoline group received more antidepressants at baseline, which could explain result of improvement in depressive symptoms in that group, although doses of these antidepressants were not increased. - A positive result would perhaps have been more plausible in the cognitive aspect, but was not, and instead occurred in depressive symptoms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nejtek 2008</td>
<td>RCT Double-blind Parallel groups Added treatment</td>
<td>Outpatient Two centres</td>
<td>BD I (5/93/94) BD II (3/15/94) Current manic, hypomanic, or mixed episode (YMRS&gt; 9)</td>
<td>1.quetiapine: 100-600 mg/day 2. risperidone: 1-6 mg/day</td>
<td>N = 80 Quetiapine = 42 Risperidone = 38</td>
<td>Consumption variables:</td>
<td>- Sample too small (no potency analysis) to detect significant differences between two active treatments. - No placebo control to adequately interpret the effects of the intervention. - Low inclusion of subjects: 651 pass the screening, but only 80 are randomized and take at least one dose of treatment. - Very high dropout rate: only 15% of subjects completed 20 weeks of treatment. - AstraZeneca provided the Quetiapine.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: AD: Antidepressants; AP: Antipsychotics; AS: Antiseizure; BD: Bipolar Disorder; CCQ: Cocaine craving questionnaire; IDS-C: Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology - Clinician Rated; IDS-SR: Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology - Self-Report; IQD-S: Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology - Self-Report 10-item version; MDD: Major Depressive Disorder; PRD-III: Psychobiology of Recovery in Depression III - Somatic Symptom Scale; QIDS-S: quick inventory of depressive symptomatology - 54 items. QMI: Quick Mania Interview; RCT: Randomized Control Trial; RS: Risperidone; SCQ: Substance craving questionnaire; YMRS: Young Mania Rating Scale;
for cocaine (very low quality of evidence). Also, there were no significant differences between citicoline and placebo in results of the RAVLT (total number of words, alternative word list and delayed recall) test (very low quality of evidence).

- **Recommendations**
  - In patients with BD and co-occurring cocaine abuse disorder, the use of citicoline add-on therapy to improve mood symptoms, cocaine use-related symptoms or pragmatic or functioning variables cannot be recommended.

**PICO question 11.** Is adjuvant treatment with citicoline effective to reduce symptoms of BD, to reduce consumption of methamphetamines or to improve pragmatic variables and functioning in patients with BD and methamphetamine consumption?

Methamphetamine use disorders are common and persons with mood disorders, particularly BD, have high rates of methamphetamine dependence. In one RCT, 48 outpatients with BD I and II, unspecified affective disorder, schizoaffective disorder depressive type or major depressive disorder and methamphetamine dependence were randomized to citicoline (2000 mg/day) or placebo for 12 weeks (Sherwood-Brown & Gabrielson, 2012a). Mood was assessed using Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology-Clinician Version (IDS-C) and cognition with the Hopkins Verbal Learning Test (HVLT). Drug use was determined by urine drug screens. In the IDS-SR scale, the mean score was 6.9 times lower in the citicoline group vs placebo (very low quality of evidence). Regarding methamphetamine use, the group of citicoline showed an improvement of urine drug testing for methamphetamine (very low quality of evidence). Significant differences between citicoline and placebo in scores of the HVLT test were not found (very low quality of evidence).

- **Recommendations**
  - In patients with BD and co-occurring methamphetamine abuse disorder, citicoline add-on therapy to improve mood symptoms, methamphetamine use-related symptoms or pragmatic or functioning variables cannot be recommended.

**PICO question 12.** Is adjuvant treatment with lamotrigine effective to reduce symptoms of BD, to reduce consumption of cocaine or to improve pragmatic variables and functioning in patients with BD and cocaine consumption?

Lamotrigine appears to be useful for depressive symptoms and relapse prevention in BD. A 10-week RCT of lamotrigine was conducted in 120 outpatients with BD, depressed or mixed mood state, and cocaine dependence (Sherwood Brown, Sunderajan, Hu, Sowell & Carmody, 2012b). Cocaine use was quantified weekly by urine drug screens and the Time Line Follow Back (TLFB) method. Mood was quantified with the HDRS, Quick Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology-SR (QIDS-SR), and YMRS. Cocaine craving was assessed with the cocaine-craving questionnaire. Adherence was assessed by pills dispensed and returned. Differences between lamotrigine and placebo regarding manic or depressive symptoms were not found (moderate quality of evidence). Percentage of cocaine-positive urine drug screens and the Cocaine Craving Questionnaire (CCQ) scores did not differ between groups. However, dollars spent on cocaine showed a significant between-group difference on both initial and by-week effect (moderate quality of evidence). Adherence was 92% with lamotrigine and 93% with placebo (moderate quality of evidence).

- **Recommendations**
  - In patients with BD and co-occurring cocaine abuse disorder, lamotrigine add-on therapy to reduce cocaine use-related symptoms may be recommended (moderate strength recommendation).

**PICO question 13.** Is adjuvant treatment with quetiapine vs risperidone effective to reduce symptoms of BD, to reduce consumption of psychostimulants or to improve pragmatic variables and functioning in patients with BD and psychostimulant consumption?

A RCT was conducted in 80 outpatients with BD (type I, type II current manic episode, hypomanic or mixed) and concurrent cocaine or methamphetamine dependence, treated with add-on quetiapine (100-600 mg/day) or risperidone (1-6 mg/day) (Nejtek et al., 2008). Patients were followed for 20 weeks. Both quetiapine and risperidone (control group) improved depressive and manic symptoms assessed with the IDS-30 and YMRS instruments but differences were not statistically significant (very low quality of evidence). Also, differences between quetiapine and risperidone in improvement of psychostimulant consumption assessed by drug urine testing were not observed (low quality of evidence). Side effects evaluated with the Psychobiology of Recovery in Depression III—Somatic Symptom Scale (PRD-III) were also similar (very low quality of evidence).

- **Recommendations**
  - In patients with BD and co-occurring psychostimulant abuse disorder, quetiapine or risperidone add-on therapy to reduce mood symptoms, psychostimulant-related symptoms or to improve pragmatic variables and functioning cannot be recommended.

**Patients with BD and nicotine use**

Details about included studies are shown in Table 3.
Clinical practice guideline on pharmacological and psychological management of adult patients with bipolar disorder and comorbid substance use

Table 3. Bipolar disorder and Nicotine use disorder.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Diagnosis</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>EXP(N)/COMP(N)</th>
<th>Follow-up</th>
<th>Outcome variables (Clinical, consumption and pragmatic)</th>
<th>Limitations and bias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chengappa 2014</td>
<td>RCT Double-blind Parallel groups Added treatment</td>
<td>BD type I (49/60) BD type II (5/60) BD NS (6/60), in euthymia (MADRS and YMRS 9), or without changes in drug treatment in the previous 8 weeks, and without decompensation in the previous 6 months AND Smoker &gt; 10 cig/day and expired CO &gt; 10 ppm.</td>
<td>1. Varenicline. Standard titration 2. Placebo. No data on concomitant treatments 15 minutes of each visit with counselling to quit smoking for all participants</td>
<td>N = 60 12 weeks of treatment AND up to 24 weeks of follow-up</td>
<td>Primary variable: - Onset of abstinence: 7 days without smoking, reported by the patient and verified by expired CO levels &lt;10 ppm at 12 weeks. - Other variables: - 4 consecutive weeks of abstinence (also reported and verified by CO levels). - Maintenance of abstinence at 24 weeks among those who gave up smoking in the 12 weeks.</td>
<td>- Short-term efficacy data are very favourable for varenicline, but not so good mid-term: 9 out of 15 patients who quit smoking with varenicline relapsed. At 24 weeks, there were no significant differences between the groups. - Sample size is small for studying possible adverse effects, especially the appearance of psychopathological decompensation (although a tendency towards the appearance of depressive symptoms is already detected). 31 patients treated with varenicline.</td>
<td>Conducted in 2 centres.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PICO question 14.** Is adjuvant treatment with varenicline effective to reduce symptoms of BD, to reduce nicotine consumption or to improve pragmatic variables and functioning in patients with BD and nicotine consumption?

In one RCT the efficacy of varenicline vs placebo administered for 12 weeks in 69 euthymic bipolar subjects motivated to quit smoking was examined (Chengappa et al., 2014). In the outcome of improvement of depressive symptoms (MDRS), anxiety (HAM-A), mania (YMRS), and CGI scores, differences in favour of varenicline were not reported (low quality of evidence). The primary outcome of the study was nicotine abstinence defined as 7 days of abstinence evaluated by self-report and confirmed by exhaled Carbon Monoxide (CO) levels < 10 ppm at 12 weeks. Statistically significant differences in the primary outcome between the groups of varenicline and placebo were found. Significant differences were also observed for 4-week abstinence and reduction of CO levels (moderate quality of evidence). Significant differences between varenicline and placebo in abstinence at 24 weeks or reduction of the number of cigarettes in the last week were not found (low quality of evidence). Abnormal dreams occurred significantly more often in varenicline-treated subjects than in those receiving placebo (moderate quality of evidence). Differences in withdrawal rates were not found (moderate quality of evidence).

- **Recommendations**
  - In patients with BD and co-occurring nicotine abuse disorder, the use of varenicline to improve nicotine abstinence can be recommended (weak recommendation).

**PICO question 15.** Is psychological treatment effective to reduce symptoms of BD, to reduce consumption of drugs of abuse or to improve pragmatic variables and functioning in patients with BD and SUD?

Two RCTs evaluated behaviourial treatment in patients with BD and SUD (Weiss et al., 2007; Weiss et al., 2009). One RCT compared 20 sessions of integrated group therapy that addresses the two disorders simultaneously with group drug counselling. Thirty-one patients were included in each treatment group and followed for 3 months. Outcomes were the number of days of substance use during treatment and the number of days of substance use (Weiss et al., 2007). In the other RCT, 61 patients with BD and substance dependence were randomized to a briefer version of 12 sessions of integrated group therapy (n = 31) or group drug counselling (n = 30). The same main outcomes of interest were evaluated. Patients were followed for 3 months (Weiss et al., 2009).

In the RCT of 20 sessions of group therapy (Weiss et al., 2007), overall, substance use decreased during treatment, but substance use remained significantly lower in integrated group therapy patients as compared to baseline. This difference was maintained at 3 months. In relation to improvement of mood symptoms, scores of the HDRS and YMRS decreased significantly in integrated group therapy as compared to baseline. In the RCT of a brief version of integrated group therapy (Weiss et al. 2009), substance use decreased significantly in both the integrated group therapy and drug counselling group with statistically significant differences for within-group comparisons from baseline to the last month of treatment, and from baseline to the last months of follow-up. The between-group...
difference in risk for mood episodes during treatment was marginally significant, with a 1.8 times greater decline for patients on integrated group therapy vs drug counselling group.

- **Recommendations**
  - In patients with BD and co-occurring SUD, integrated group therapy can be recommended (weak recommendation).

**Discussion**

This review synthesizes the pharmacological and psychosocial interventions that have been conducted in comorbid BD and SUDs while also providing clinical recommendations about which intervention elements are helpful for addressing substance use versus mood symptoms in patients with these co-occurring conditions.

Very few of the randomized trials performed so far have provided consistent evidence for the management of both mood symptoms and substance use in patients with a BD. Surprisingly, no clinical trials are available for bipolar patients using cannabis. Some treatments have shown benefit for mood symptoms without benefits for alcohol or illicit substance use. Our results suggest that 1) we can (weakly) recommend the use of adjuvant valproate or naltrexone to improve symptoms of alcohol use disorder; 2) Lamotrigine add-on therapy seems to reduce cocaine-related symptoms and is therefore recommended (moderate strength); and 3) Varenicline is (weakly) recommended to improve nicotine abstinence.

Quitting substance abuse in BD is of the highest importance due to the outcome improvement after quitting. In a study done in first psychotic episodes that included both schizophrenia and affective bipolar patients, it was found that quitting cannabis improved considerably the prognosis in the long-term (González-Pinto et al., 2011b). The same has been proven in large European samples diagnosed with BD (Zorrilla et al., 2015). Both cannabis and alcohol are especially difficult to quit when there is a depressive polarity (González-Pinto et al., 2010; González-Ortega et al., 2015). Therefore, managing depressive symptoms and doing more clinical trials in patients with BD and substance abuse are mandatory. Regarding nicotine use, in real-world clinical settings it is feasible and safe to help patients with BD to quit smoking (García-Portilla et al., 2016). It should be important to investigate the relation between quitting drugs and the use of lithium, the gold standard of BD treatment, with effectiveness in treating depressive symptoms in the real world (González-Pinto, López-Peña, Bermúdez-Ampudia, Vieta & Martínez-Cengotitabengoa, 2018).

At present, integrated group therapy is the most-well validated and efficacious approach on substance use outcomes if substance use is targeted in an initial treatment phase. For a subsequent phase, additional psychosocial BD treatments may be needed for mood and functioning benefits.

Our review highlights the need for more research in this area and for larger, multisite studies with generalizable samples to provide more definite guidance for clinical practice.

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**Conflict of interests**

None of the authors report any conflict of interest related to this manuscript.

**References**


