

Verbal memory test performance in patients with bipolar I disorder attending a psychiatric clinic of a university hospital in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

ABSTRACT

Objective: The study aims to determine pattern of verbal memory and learning impairment and its associated factors among patients with bipolar I disorder in a psychiatric clinic of a university hospital. **Methods:** A case control study comparing verbal memory test performance in 40 patients with bipolar I disorder to that of 40 healthy normal subjects using Rey Auditory Verbal Learning Test (RAVLT). The association between demographic, clinical characteristics and poor verbal memory performance were examined. **Results:** Up to 92% of patients with bipolar I disorder have impaired short term working memory in this hospital-based study. They also recalled fewer words in all the RAVLT trials and had difficulties learning the word list in comparison to that of normal healthy individuals. Verbal memory and learning impairment are observed in bipolar illness in the absence of active mood symptoms while duration and severity of illness are not found to have any effect on verbal memory and learning. **Conclusion:** There is consistent verbal memory and learning problems in individuals with bipolar I disorder and their presence in the absence of mania, depression and mixed symptoms during the course of the illness suggests a trait related deficit.

Keyword: Bipolar I disorder; Verbal memory; Learning; Trait deficit