

Foreword

Eugene Paykel MD FRCP FRCPsych FMedSci
Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry
University of Cambridge

Over the last 20 years there has been increasing recognition that bipolar disorder is often a very severe and potentially disabling psychiatric condition. This has been accompanied by an increase in research into many aspects, ranging from molecular genetics to treatment and outcome. The boundary between unipolar and bipolar affective disorder has become less clear than we once thought, as milder and sub-threshold bipolar forms have become recognised. The range of available treatments has expanded, with recognition of mood-stabilising effects of some antiepileptic drugs, and application of psychological approaches such as cognitive therapy and psychoeducation. The specific indications and best places in practice of some of the newer treatments are still in the process of becoming well defined. In the UK, as mental health specialist services have become focussed on severe disorders, patients with bipolar disorder have become important in clinical management for all members of the mental health team.

Dr Mark Agius, guest editor of this issue, has a very high profile in psychiatric postgraduate education. He organises many international symposia and meetings and he has a wide network of British and European contacts, whose expertise he has made full use of in this issue. The authors include the two best known senior academic experts on the disorder on this side of the Atlantic, Jules Angst and Guy Goodwin.

The topic coverage in this issue is very wide. The emphasis is particularly practical, for those who treat and manage patients with the disorder. Papers range through basic concepts, neurobiology, pharmacology, diagnosis, treatment, recovery, comorbidity, problems in different situations and lessons for general practitioners.

I am pleased to commend this issue as an excellent update for all involved in the treatment and management of patients with this often severe and recurrent disorder.