

Abstract

Objective:

The author assessed whether spontaneous and intrusive prospective imagery is more prevalent in patients with remitted bipolar I disorder than patients with remitted major depressive disorder and non-psychiatric controls.

Method:

The authors recruited 39 participants suffering from remitted bipolar I disorder, 42 participants with remitted major depressive disorder, and 39 non-psychiatric controls with no current or prior history of mental disorder. The psychiatric diagnoses were verified with Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Diagnoses (SCID). Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II) and Young Mania Rating Scale (YMRS) with a priori cut-off scores were then used to further confirm that the recruited participants were in remission from bipolar I disorder or major depressive disorder. Eligible participants then completed a battery of self-administered questionnaires, assessing general use of imagery in daily life and emotional impact of prospective imagery.

Results:

Patients with remitted bipolar I disorder scored higher than patients with major depression in remission, and non-psychiatric controls on measures of general use of imagery in daily life and of the impact of prospective imagery. Compared with patients with major depression in remission and non-psychiatric controls, patients with bipolar I disorder reported a higher median number of personally relevant positive prospective images. Patients with remitted major depressive disorder had higher scores on measures of

prospective imagery than non-psychiatric controls. The findings remained significant even after considering the anxiety score as a covariate.

Conclusions:

When compared with patients with major depressive disorder in remission and non-psychiatric controls, patients with remitted bipolar I disorder had a higher tendency to the general use of imagery in daily life and experienced a higher emotional impact of prospective imagery, and they were also more likely to find such prospective imagery intrusive. Such elevated susceptibility to mental imagery may contribute to inter-episode mood instability, manic and depressive recurrences. Future interventions could target mental imagery in the acute and maintenance treatment of bipolar disorders.

Keywords: bipolar disorder, depression, emotion, imagery