Bipolar Disorder: The Different Treatment Phases

Definitions

- **Response**: 50% reduction in a score from a standard rating scale of symptomatology from an appropriate baseline, regardless of index episode type (manic, depressed, or mixed)
- **Remission**: Absence or minimal symptoms of both mania and depression for at least 1 week. Sustained remission requires at least eight consecutive weeks of remission, and perhaps as many as 12 weeks.
- **Recovery**: In the original proposal by Frank et al (1991) recovery is achieved when there is remission even in the absence of any treatment
- **Recurrence**: re-emergence of symptoms after the point of recovery
- **Relapse**: re-emergence of symptoms, part of the index episode
- **Long-term treatment**: traditionally divided into continuation and maintenance (or prophylactic) treatment
- **Continuation treatment**:
  - **Goals**: Once remission has been achieved, the goals of treatment are to protect the patient from:
    - Relapses: re-emergence of symptoms
    - Treatment emergent affective switches (TEAS): episodes of opposite polarity
  - **Time criteria**: According to the International Society of Bipolar Disorders (ISBD):
    - Recent manic episode: 4 weeks
    - Recent depressive episode: 8 weeks
- **Maintenance treatment**:
  - Associated with the concept of recovery
  - Since we cannot identify the exact time point of recovery in treated patients, we do not know for sure when we move from continuation to maintenance treatment

References