

# **ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LITHIUM TREATMENT IN BIPOLAR DISORDERS: A PRACTICAL COURSE**

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## **Individual Presentation Titles and Preliminary Timetable:**

9:00-9:45 M. Bauer: History, pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics

9:45-10:15 M. Gitlin: Treatment of acute depression and mania with lithium

10:15-10:45 M. Bauer: Maintenance treatment with lithium: response prediction and patient selection

10:45-11:15 Break

11:15 -12:15 M. Gitlin: Practical guide of lithium therapy and management of side effects

## **Course Description:**

Pharmacological treatment with mood stabilizers is essential for the long-term (relapse-preventive) treatment of bipolar disorder. More than 66 years from the breakthrough of identifying lithium salts to have antimanic and prophylactic activity, modern research serves to further substantiate lithium's position at the front-line in the treatment of bipolar disorder. Undoubtedly, lithium is an essential medication for patients with mood disorders and represents the most valuable treatment option in the long-term treatment of bipolar disorders. When used correctly, lithium unquestionably produces the most dramatic benefits of any medication in psychopharmacology. Two recent meta-analyses confirmed its efficacy regarding the prevention of overall mood episodes, manic episodes, depressive episodes (dependent on the type of analyses performed) and acceptability (completion of study). Despite of this and the fact that lithium is consistently ranked as first choice for the long-term treatment of bipolar disorders in international treatment guidelines lithium is dramatically underutilized in clinical practice in many countries. Since its introduction in modern psychiatry in 1949, many new aspects of its use in psychiatry have been discovered in basic and clinical research, including anti-suicidal and antidepressant properties. Despite the successes achieved through application of lithium treatment, the drug remains an ineffective option for a proportion of bipolar patients. Not all patients are so-called 'lithium responders' and it has become a task of great importance to be able to establish whether or not a given patient will benefit from its treatment. It is also important to establish whether even non-responders to mood stabilizing effects of lithium may still benefit from some of the other actions of this element (e.g., from its anti-suicidal effects). The major questions are who is getting lithium, at which point, and what algorithm can be offered in case a patient fails to first/second and further options, monotherapy vs. combination therapy. These questions will be addressed in this course which is a practical guide for all health care professionals, patients and their caregivers with up-to-date information about the correct use of lithium in various indications (maintenance, depression, mania, suicide prevention), essential knowledge they will require in short and long-term treatment. This course will be organized by two international experts in the treatment of mood disorders who have more than 25 years of experience in the administration

of lithium, have authored numerous scientific articles on lithium, and are also authors of a textbook (see reference list).

This course will:

- 1) Give an evidence-based overview on the various indications of lithium including efficacy, strength and weaknesses, adverse events and its management
- 2) Present “good clinical practice” how to use lithium medication (and how to avoid intoxications) properly
- 3) Give an overview of lithium’s position in currently available evidence-based treatment guidelines.
- 4) Discuss how to effectively select the right patient for the individual indication (attempts to personalize treatment).
- 5) Discuss the most important clinical issues with case vignettes.
- 6) Encourage participants beforehand to bring their own case vignettes of difficult-to-treat patients.

References:

Bauer M, Gitlin M. The essential guide to lithium treatment: a practical manual. Springer Heidelberg New York 2016

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Lewitzka U, Severus E, Bauer R, Ritter P, Müller-Oerlinghausen B, Bauer M. The suicide prevention effect of lithium: more than 20 years of evidence-a narrative review. Int J Bipolar Disord. 2015b; 3(1):32

Severus E, Taylor MJ, Sauer C, Pfennig A, Ritter P, Bauer M, Geddes JR. Lithium for prevention of mood episodes in bipolar disorders: systematic review and meta-analysis. Int J Bipolar Disord. 2014;20(2):15

Yatham LN, Kennedy SH, Parikh SV, Schaffer A, Beaulieu S, Alda M et al.: Canadian Network for Mood and Anxiety Treatments (CANMAT) and International Society for Bipolar Disorders (ISBD) collaborative update of CANMAT guidelines for the management of patients with bipolar disorder: update 2013. Bipolar Disord 2013, 15: 1-44.