



# spotlight on health

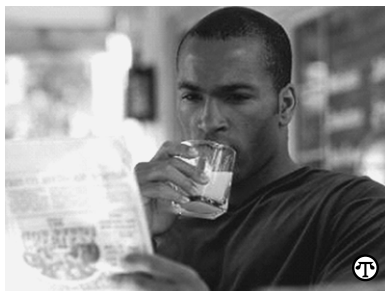
## Bipolar Disorder: A Daily Struggle For Patients, Families

(NAPSA)—Don't we all go through ups and downs in life? For the more than two million American adults who suffer from bipolar disorder, "ups and downs" are experienced to an extreme degree. Also known as manic depression, bipolar disorder is an illness that causes a person to experience extreme mood changes that alternate between manic episodes of abnormally high energy and the severe lows of depression, often with periods of normal mood in between.

For David, 33, living with bipolar disorder was a roller coaster of an existence. "I was either up or down and there was absolutely no middle ground," he said. David often went sleepless for days, and describes feeling "wild and full of energy, accomplishing many things and feeling indestructible." However, then he would crash down and become very depressed, refusing to leave the house or to involve himself in any activities.

Because of the severity of the illness, bipolar disorder can be disruptive to patients and their families, friends and colleagues, damaging relationships and causing poor job or school performance. According to David, "I wasn't reliable as a brother, a boyfriend, an employee or a supervisor because I was so unpredictable. You never knew what you were going to get from me at any point in time. I could be incredibly spectacular or completely substandard."

While bipolar disorder typically develops in late adolescence or early adulthood, it is not often recognized as an illness. As a result, people may suffer for many years before they are properly diagnosed and treated. Although David first showed signs of bipolar disorder in childhood, he was not diagnosed until August 2002, about 20 years later.



"It wasn't until I had hit rock bottom—unemployed, reclusive, out of money and suicidal—that I got the proper help I needed and began managing my illness," he said.

Like many other mental illnesses, bipolar disorder is not identified through a brain scan, a blood test or any kind of laboratory test. A physician makes a diagnosis of the disorder based on many factors, including a patient's symptoms, course of illness and, when available, family history. It is a long-term illness that must be carefully managed throughout a person's life.

In David's case, his doctor started him on a new treatment, Equetro™, for the manic and mixed episodes associated with bipolar disorder. David says Equetro provided him with balance and a middle ground so that he can experience life without his previous mood swings. David adds, "I did not experience any problems with side effects, including weight gain." The Equetro Prescribing Information states that the most common side effects with Equetro are dizziness, drowsiness, unsteadiness, nausea and vomiting.

David also says Equetro has helped him overcome the suffering caused by his bipolar disorder for so many years. "My parents say that they 'have their son back' and my friends all agree that I am more reliable," he said.

"I now have a solid network of family, friends and co-workers.

Most important to me, I have been able to develop a wonderful relationship with a woman to whom I was recently married. I feel like a stronger member of my community and know that I can make sound, healthy, quality-of-mind decisions."

This patient testimonial reflects one man's experience with Bipolar I Disorder and his treatment with Equetro.

For more information on bipolar disorder or treatment with Equetro, visit [www.equetro.com](http://www.equetro.com).

*Equetro contains carbamazepine. If you are currently taking another medication that contains carbamazepine, do not begin taking Equetro without discussing this with your healthcare provider.*

*If you are taking any other medications, including oral contraceptives, over-the-counter medications, or herbal products, be sure to inform your healthcare provider as Equetro can interact with other medications.*

*Equetro was generally well tolerated in clinical studies. The most common side effects, particularly when first starting on Equetro, were dizziness, drowsiness, unsteadiness, nausea, and vomiting.*

*Contact your healthcare provider if you have any unexplained bruising, fever, or infection. Products that contain carbamazepine have been associated with rare but serious types of blood disorders.*

*People with bipolar disorder have an increased risk for suicide. It is important to discuss risk factors for suicide with your healthcare provider. If you are experiencing these risk factors, it is important to contact your healthcare provider immediately or seek emergency care.*

*Please see complete Prescribing Information at [www.equetro.com](http://www.equetro.com).*