

Bipolar Mood Disorder

Sandra is a 29 year old single woman, who is referred to you for psychological assistance under the Medicare Better Access scheme. She has recently been discharged from an inpatient unit after her first psychiatric admission. She had been hospitalised voluntarily after her colleagues grew concerned about her increasingly unusual behaviour over the preceding few weeks.

Sandra works as a nurse and over recent weeks she had been unusually gregarious and assertive at work, and also on a few occasions became overtly irritable with senior staff in a manner which was completely out of character.

Over the days preceding her inpatient stay, Sandra was working night shifts and had told colleagues that she was sleeping only 2 or 3 hours per day. She nonetheless felt she had plenty of energy and could concentrate easily at work. Sandra also reported excitement at commencing a new sexual relationship with a much older man who she had met on a train.

Colleagues also saw this as out of character because Sandra was a temperamentally quiet and somewhat passive young woman who had previously been anxious about pursuing relationships with men.

The charge nurse ultimately took Sandra aside and suggested she see a hospital psychiatrist, after Sandra arrived late to her shift, wearing full make-up, and moving about the ward in an excited manner and speaking loudly.

The psychiatrist discovered that Sandra had not slept at all for the past 36 hours, and that Sandra now thought that the child that she would have with her new partner would be the Messiah.

Sandra became teary when the psychiatrist suggested she was showing symptoms of a manic episode, and agreed to be admitted to the hospital's psychiatric ward.

Did you know...

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This is a de-identified vignette.

Case study Sandra: Bipolar Mood Disorder. 07.13

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