



## **Treating Patients with Bipolar Disorder**

We have adopted the *American Psychiatric Association's Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Patients with Bipolar Disorder, Revision*. You can find the text of this guideline online at: [www.psychiatryonline.com/content.aspx?aID=50136](http://www.psychiatryonline.com/content.aspx?aID=50136).

The following measures will be used to assess performance against two important aspects of the bipolar disorder guideline—use of pharmacological treatment and serum level testing:

- For patients diagnosed with bipolar disorder (ICD-9-CM codes 296 through 296.16 and 296.4 through 296.99), the first-line pharmacological treatment includes the use of lithium and divalproex (Depakote), among other mood stabilizers and certain atypical antipsychotic agents. Treatment with antidepressant medication is not recommended for patients in a bipolar manic or mixed phase.
- For patients who have been stabilized on lithium, serum lithium level testing should be conducted at least once every six months.
- For patients who have been stabilized on divalproex (Depakote), serum valproic acid level testing should be conducted at least once every six months.

No guideline should be considered the sole source of guidance for the treatment of a particular disorder. They are designed to provide a framework for treatment decisions. They are not intended as a protocol of treatment measures or to replace the clinical judgment of the provider.

*Missouri Care, an Aetna Health Plan*

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