

Outcomes Measurement Case Study

The Lifelong Learning Initiative on Bipolar Disorder



Overview:

Bipolar disorder presents unique diagnosis and treatment challenges for clinicians. Following its 2005 ***Lifelong Learning Initiative on Bipolar Disorder***, but prior to launching the 2006 counterpart, CME LLC conducted a thorough needs assessment to determine knowledge gaps and behavioral issues among primary care physicians (PCPs) and psychiatrists. These knowledge gaps and educational needs resembled some residual educational needs that existed following the 2005 ***Lifelong Learning Initiative on Bipolar Disorder***. Physicians across both specialties needed to improve their abilities to:

- Distinguish bipolar disorder from similar depressive disorders
- Use effective screening tools
- Understand the efficacy and tolerability of various medications
- Factor other patient conditions into a treatment plan
- Increase patient compliance with treatment programs



Challenge:

CME LLC designed education curricula consisting of two three-month series of continuing medical education programs for PCPs and psychiatrists designed to narrow the educational gaps outlined during the 2006 needs assessment process and the 2005 ***Lifelong Learning Initiative on Bipolar Disorder's*** outcomes measurement program. CME LLC needed to design an effective outcomes measurement approach to determine progress achieved in closing these educational gaps during the 2006 program. ***The Lifelong Learning Initiative on Bipolar Disorder*** offered clinician learners two breakfast meetings series with 25 meetings each and a wide range of online clinical resources, including numerous articles, audio courses and other valuable educational opportunities.

Solution:

CME LLC designed and administered a three-phase outcomes measurement study to gauge whether and to what degree educational outcomes were met. CME LLC measured the same knowledge gaps that were identified during needs assessment before and after delivering the education. CME LLC also followed up two months later to take additional measurements focused on behavioral/attitude change, retention and application.

Results:

The study conclusively demonstrated the effectiveness of the 2006 ***Lifelong Learning Initiative on Bipolar Disorder*** and led to key recommendations for improving content, delivery and results of future programs.

Important findings and recommendations emerged from the study, including:

- More than 80 percent of attendees in each program said they were "confident" or "very confident" about applying what they learned to their practices
- Both physician groups demonstrated immediate learning of program content
- Psychiatrists retained more information than PCPs two months later
- PCPs and psychiatrists increased their confidence in distinguishing bipolar disorder
- Both groups need to improve their abilities to evaluate and manage patients with bipolar disorder
- PCPs increased their use of screening tools; psychiatrists did not
- The study also identified a variety of specific, unmet educational needs:
 - Both PCPs and psychiatrists need:
 - More education on the efficacy and safety of atypical antipsychotic drugs
 - Articles, brochures and fact sheets to improve patient understanding/treatment compliance
 - More education on the value/use of screening tools in reaching an accurate diagnosis
 - PCPs need:
 - More education on differentiating between bipolar and depressive disorders
 - Reinforcement of program content after 60 days to aid retention, especially among PCPs