



From the desk of Dr Harry

## Genes for Childhood Bipolar Disorder

Harry Zehnwirth MBBS (HON) FRACP

There is a raging international controversy as to whether bipolar disorder even exists in children. The Americans say yes. Much of the rest of the world says no.

We know that America often leads the way, when others are slow to follow. However Americans sometimes *over* diagnose and treat, before pulling back and meeting the rest of the world half way with some sort of consensus.

Bipolar disorder is characterized by mood swings, from depression to elation, hyperactivity, grandiosity, productive and creative sleeplessness. It is not uncommon and many famous people have been considered to have bipolar disorder, including Beethoven, Ben Stiller, Patty Duke, Jim Carey, Handel and Jimmy Hendrix.

Hot off the press is research suggesting that our biological clock genes (those that control circadian rhythm) are associated with purported childhood bipolar disorder. For the full article published on BMC Psychiatry in November 2009:

<http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-244X/9/70>

“The mind is a dangerous thing to close” ....keep yours open, to American and other points of view.