

AGE-RELATED FUNCTIONAL IMPAIRMENT  
AND BIPOLAR DISORDER

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**INTRODUCTION:** Bipolar disorder is a prominent contributor to functional impairment worldwide, but an independent impact of bipolar disorder and ageing on functioning has yet to be demonstrated. Age has been associated with disability in bipolar disorder in cross-sectional studies, but as ageing is generally associated with impairment, controlled studies are necessary to verify whether there is a specific association. **AIMS:** The present study had the objective of evaluating age-related effects on functional status in bipolar disorder, with matched controls as a standard for the age-related impairment. **METHODS:** One-hundred patients with bipolar disorder and matched controls were evaluated for disability with the Functioning Assessment Short Test, a short functioning interview validated in Portuguese and Spanish. Age-related effects, controlled for confounders, were cross-sectionally evaluated. **RESULTS:** Patients were significantly more impaired than controls. Regression showed independent effects of age in both groups, but the effect was significantly stronger in patients. **CONCLUSIONS:** Bipolar disorder was an important effect modifier of age impact on functioning in this study. While a longitudinal design is necessary to effectively demonstrate this differential effect, this study further characterizes bipolar disorder as a chronic and impairing illness.