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### A PILOT STUDY OF AT-RISK CRITERIA FOR BIPOLAR DISORDERS IN HELP SEEKING ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS

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**Introduction:** We have developed ultra-high risk criteria for bipolar affective disorder (bipolar at-risk - BAR) which include general criteria such as being in the peak age range of the onset of the disorder and a combination of specific criteria including sub-threshold mania, depressive symptoms, cyclothymic features and genetic risk. In the current study, the predictive and discriminant validity of these criteria were tested in help seeking adolescents and young adults.

**Method:** This medical file-audit study was conducted at ORYGEN Youth Health (OYH), a public mental health program for young people aged between 15 and 24 years and living in metropolitan Melbourne, Australia. BAR criteria were applied to the intake assessments of all non-psychotic patients who were being treated in OYH on 31 January.08. All entries were then checked for conversion criteria. Hypomania/mania related additions or alterations to existing treatments or initiation of new treatment by the treating psychiatrist served as conversion criteria to mania.

**Results:** The BAR criteria were applied to 173 intake assessments. Of these, 22 patients (12.7%) met BAR criteria. The follow-up period of the sample was 265.5 days on average (SD 214.7). There were significantly more cases in the BAR group (22.7%,  $n = 5$ ) than in the non-BAR group (0.7%,  $n = 1$ ) who met conversion criteria ( $p < .001$ ).

**Conclusions:** These findings support the notion that people who develop a first episode of mania can be identified during the prodromal phase. The proposed criteria need further evaluation in prospective clinical trials.