THE BIPOLAR YOUTH ACTION PROJECT: CONDUCTING COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH WITH YOUTH WITH BIPOLAR DISORDER

Research Objectives:
The Bipolar Youth Action Project (BYAP) aimed to expand the scant literature on effective self-management strategies utilized by youth with bipolar disorder, and investigate which means of knowledge translation youth with bipolar disorder are receptive towards. A secondary aim was to expand the knowledge base on conducting participatory research with youth populations living with bipolar disorder. It is this secondary aim that this poster will address.

Methods:
The BYAP was a community-based participatory research project conducted in partnership between CREST.BD and the Bipolar Disorder Society of British Columbia. The 24-month project moved through four distinct phases, each directly involving youth with bipolar disorder. These were: (1) grant-writing; (2) recruiting and training 12 youth peer researchers with bipolar disorder; (3) Research Forum I, which recruited additional youth to consult on self-management strategies; and (4) Research Forum II, which recruited additional youth to consult on knowledge translation methods.

Results:
7 of the initial 12 peer researchers remained on the BYAP from recruitment to project end. Peer researchers built capacity in multiple domains, including public speaking (N=7), event planning (N=7), and qualitative data analysis (N=1), and designed and delivered presentations of Forum I findings. Youth engagement peaked near Forums and was enhanced by email check-ins, collectively chosen deadlines, and support from the academic team.

Conclusions:
Meaningfully involving youth with bipolar disorder as peer researchers requires consistent communication, flexibility to meet their needs, and support from academic researchers. Partnering with youth with bipolar disorder holds potential to increase relevance of clinical findings.