Tentative Outline

“The faces of Mania: the legacy of Athanasios Koukopoulos”

Guest Editors:

Sani, G  NEMOS Department (Neuroscience, Mental Health, and Sensory Organs), Sapienza University, School of Medicine and Psychology, Sant'Andrea Hospital, Rome, Italy; Centro Lucio Bini, Rome, Italy.

Kotzalidis, GD  NEMOS Department (Neuroscience, Mental Health, and Sensory Organs), Sapienza University, School of Medicine and Psychology, Sant'Andrea Hospital, Rome, Italy.

Girardi, P  NEMOS Department (Neuroscience, Mental Health, and Sensory Organs), Sapienza University, School of Medicine and Psychology, Sant'Andrea Hospital, Rome, Italy; Centro Lucio Bini, Rome, Italy.

Aims & Scope:

“Mania is the fire, depression its ash”: Athanasios Koukopoulos used this efficacious metaphor to explain the pathogenic mechanism underlying mood disorders. According to his studies, which were based on a long-term, systematic, clinical observation of the patients, mania is the primum movens of a mood disorder, even when the clinical picture is predominantly characterized by depressive episodes. In other words, he considered that there is an intrinsic link between mania and depression, and that the excitatory process of mania is the primary process, with depression being its secondary outcome.

In 20th Century psychiatry, depression and mania were often conceived as possibly associated conditions, but the possibility that they occur separately was also recognized. The two resulting entities, bipolar disorder and unipolar depression, were nosographically separated and grouped together, first under the heading of affective, subsequently of mood disorders. This conception is enhanced in contemporary psychiatry, with the suppression of the mood disorder category and the complete separation between depressive and bipolar disorders in the DSM-5. This view is partly based on a narrow definition of mania (the occurrence of euphoric or irritable mood with hyperactivity, decreased need for sleep, and a few other symptoms, occurring episodically for 1 week or longer) and a rather broad definition of depression (episodes are defined as depressed mood with changes in sleep, appetite, interest, or decreased energy lasting for 2 weeks or longer; chronic depression is captured in the definition of dysthymia). In epidemiological studies and in clinical practice, depression is viewed as more prominent, common, and problematic. Mania is viewed as uncommon and more likely to subside.

With the advent of the psychopharmacological era in general, and of the antidepressants in particular, clinicians and researchers paid more attention to the treatment of depression. Actually, patients with bipolar mood disorder spend twice as much time in depression than in mania or hypomania. However, despite all efforts, mood disorders are still one of the major sources of morbidity and mortality, and the leading cause of disability and suicide worldwide. Since our nearly 60 years of mood disorder treatment is
quite unsatisfactory, we need to search for alternative therapeutic strategies, and this may require a
general change in our views and conceptions of mood disorders.

Koukopoulos suggested that mood disorders should be viewed from a different perspective, i.e., mania
should not be considered simply as episodic euphoria plus hyperactivity, but rather reflecting a wide
range of excitatory behaviours; contrariwise, depression should be viewed more narrowly. Further, he
hypothesized that the two conditions are connected unidirectionally; again in contrast to previous theories
of mania that interpreted it as a flight from depression, he hypothesized a primacy of mania, viewing
depression as a consequence of the excitatory processes.

Despite the availability of a bulk of clinical, neurobiological, and neuropsychological data of mood
disorders, their aetiology and pathophysiology still remain elusive. In the effort to find solid answers
regarding the neurobiology and aetiopathogenesis of mood disorders, Koukopoulos’ pathogenic
hypothesis, based on his clinical endeavours, may allow clinicians and researchers to better understand
them, hence to seek alternative treatment strategies.

With this special issue we invite investigators to contribute with original research articles as well as
reviews that will stimulate the continuing efforts to understand this important topic.

Key words:
Bipolar Disorder; Cyclothymia; Depression; Excitement; Mania; Mixed states; Temperament.

Subtopics of interest include, but are NOT limited to:

- The development of the “primacy of mania” hypothesis
- Role of excitatory processes in mood disorders
- Excitability and temperament
- Excitability and anxiety
- Influence of excitatory processes on the clinical or neuropsychological picture of
  patients with mood disorders
- The role of excitement in the manic-depressive cycle
- The role of excitement in the recurrence of mood disorders
- Neurobiological markers of excitement in mood disorders
- Neuroimaging correlates of excitatory processes
- Relationship between “pure” versus secondary mania
- Potential new pharmacological strategies for patients with mood disorders
- Potential new non-pharmacological strategies for patients with mood disorders

Schedule:

Manuscript submission deadline: December 1st, 2015
Peer Review Due: January 15th, 2016
Revision Due: March 1st, 2016
Notification of acceptance by the Guest Editor: March 15th, 2016
Final manuscripts due: April 1st, 2016