

Seasonal affective disorder. A description of the syndrome and preliminary findings with light therapy.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a syndrome characterized by recurrent depressions that occur annually at the same time each year. We describe 29 patients with SAD; most of them had a bipolar affective disorder, especially bipolar II, and their depressions were generally characterized by hypersomnia, overeating, and carbohydrate craving and seemed to respond to changes in climate and latitude. Sleep recordings in nine depressed patients confirmed the presence of hypersomnia and showed increased sleep latency and reduced slow-wave (delta) sleep. Preliminary studies in 11 patients suggest that extending the photoperiod with bright artificial light has an antidepressant effect.

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