

Is catatonia more of a gradual onset or does it come on suddenly?

Dr. Northoff:

As always, you can have both kinds of developments. So we really distinguish between a more affectively driven form of catatonia. This can be hyperexcited or hypoexcited, which usually responds very well to lorazepam, and that usually comes on relatively quickly. So you might have a depression before, you might have a bipolar disorder before, and then suddenly you become catatonic, or you can also first show symptoms of catatonia right away.

Then you have more of the chronic catatonia, which is probably more treatment-resistant to GABAergic drugs like lorazepam, and that usually comes on more slowly. So you see precursors, you see slow movement, and then suddenly they end up in a completely catatonic state, which can be in very severe forms of depression. You gradually slip into the state of catatonia, yeah? But I think that's very important — the time course of the symptoms is the key because that gives you some differential diagnostic.