

About Bipolar Children

Over the last decade and a half, the number of children diagnosed with bipolar disorder has increased fortyfold. This is a trend exclusive to the United States, and one that, alarmingly, leads to most of the diagnosed children—some of whom are toddlers—being prescribed antipsychotic drugs, often in combination with anticonvulsants. These classes of drugs have dangerous side effects, including a doubling of mortality rates, shortened life span, extreme weight gain, and Type II diabetes. In this book, psychologist Sharna Olfman leads a team of widely known experts who examine that astonishing rise in the diagnosis of pediatric bipolar disorder, particularly in the absence of any compelling evidence for either the validity of the criteria being used to diagnose it or the safety and effectiveness of the drugs being used to treat it. When a child is unnecessarily prescribed antipsychotic and anticonvulsant drugs, his or her mental and physical health may be irrecoverably compromised, says Olfman.

The contributors to this revealing and disturbing volume include psychiatrist David Healy, one of the world's leading authorities on psychotropic drugs; pediatrician Philip Landrigan, an internationally renowned environmental health researcher; and Robert Whitaker, an award winning medical journalist. The contributors identify and explain complex and interrelated factors that have set the stage for the pediatric bipolar epidemic, and they recommend practice and policy changes to stem the tide of misdiagnosis and dangerous drug prescriptions.