



# **Bipolar Children: Cutting-Edge Controversy, Insights, and Research (Childhood in America)**

*Sharna Olfman*

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Over the last decade, the number of children diagnosed with bipolar disorder has increased up to fortyfold. This is a trend exclusive to the United States, and one that, alarmingly, leads to most of the diagnosed children—some still in their infancy—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 irreversibly compromised, says Olfman. With as many as two-and-a-half million children from across the socioeconomic spectrum now taking antipsychotics, we have set the stage for widescale child abuse.

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 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.

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