

## The Impact of Delayed Diagnosis of Pediatric Bipolar Disorder: What Every Clinician Should Know

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Bipolar Disorder (BD) is a complex, chronic, and debilitating psychiatric condition characterized by episodes of (hypo)mania and major depression. BD affects approximately 1-2.5% of the world's population, or approximately 40 million individuals (Cunningham et al., 2020). While the epidemiology of Pediatric Bipolar Disorder (PBD) is still debated, the 2006 longitudinal study known as the Systematic Treatment Enhancement Program for Bipolar Disorder (STEP-BD) found that more than 50% of individuals with BD experience an onset prior to the age of 19 (Leverich et al., 2007). Yet, the average patient waits approximately 5-10 years for the appropriate diagnosis and first treatment (Ribeiro et al., 2020). BD is often triggered by early life stressors and when episodes are left untreated, there is a likelihood of more episodes occurring in a kindling-like progression. This progression leads to a more rapid recurrence of episodes, significant dysfunction, frontal cortical irregularities, cognitive impairment, shortened telomeres, a higher risk of dementia, and more difficulties in treating the disorder (Post, 2021). Research has shown that PBD has a more pernicious trajectory than adult-onset BD, thus it is crucial that researchers study the risk factors and methods of prevention for youth at risk for the disorder. Many factors impede the diagnosis of youth, leading to misdiagnosis, inappropriate treatments, and potential neuronal changes that have a lasting effect on the individual. As we have begun to know more about the long-term effects of the disorder, it is time to focus on minimizing the time to diagnosis. To combat delay in the diagnosis of youth with this disorder, we will give a thorough depiction of the impact that waiting for first treatment can have on the patient. In this presentation, we will explore in detail the neuroprogression of BD in individuals with and without an early onset. We will also discuss a standard method for diagnosing PBD for more improved clinical outcomes.

### Biography

Katrin I. Kutlucinar, MA, LGPC, is a licensed graduate professional counselor with a dedicated focus on bipolar disorder research, education, and awareness. Based at Research and Conversations About Bipolar Disorder Inc., Katrin is committed to advancing understanding and support for individuals affected by bipolar disorder. With expertise rooted in mental health counseling and a passion for evidence-based practice, she brings valuable insights and compassionate perspectives to the mental health field. Katrin's work on Wexford Drive serves as a vital resource for those seeking informed conversations and innovative approaches to managing bipolar disorder.