

Review of: "Reasons for diagnostic delays in Bipolar Disorder: Systematic review and narrative synthesis"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Revision Requests and Detailed Comments on the Study:

Title: "Investigating the Delay in Diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder: A Systematic Review and Narrative Synthesis"

Abstract and Background: The abstract provides a concise summary of the study's background, aim, design, method, results, and conclusions. The background efficiently highlights the significance of timely diagnosis in bipolar disorder (BD) and its impact on individuals and society.

Strengths:

- The study addresses a critical and underexplored aspect of mental health care: the delay in diagnosing BD.
- It utilizes a systematic review methodology, which is appropriate for summarizing a broad range of findings across different studies.

Limitations:

- The abstract could benefit from briefly mentioning the geographical diversity of the studies included, as this adds to the study's comprehensiveness and applicability.
- It would be beneficial to include key quantitative results or specific statistics in the abstract to provide more detail on the magnitude of diagnostic delays.

Design and Setting: The choice of a systematic review and narrative synthesis is suitable for the aim of the study.

Strengths:

- A comprehensive search across four major databases ensures a wide coverage of relevant literature.

Limitations:

- The methodology section does not detail the process for resolving discrepancies during study selection and data extraction. Clarification on this process would strengthen the validity of the findings.
- While the inclusion of studies across various countries is a strength, there is limited discussion on how regional healthcare systems' differences might influence the findings.

Results: The identification of five main themes contributing to diagnostic delays offers valuable insights.

Strengths:

- The thematic analysis method is robust and suitable for the qualitative nature of the data.
- The broad categorization into misdiagnosis, healthcare challenges, mental health stigma, the complex nature of BD, and individual factors provides a comprehensive overview of the issue.

Limitations:

- The paper could benefit from a more detailed discussion of how each theme specifically impacts the length of the diagnostic delay. Quantifying these delays, where data is available, would add depth to the analysis.
- While the diversity of the included studies is a strength, the synthesis does not extensively discuss the impact of cultural, social, and healthcare system differences on the findings.

Conclusions: The conclusion effectively highlights the need for education and systemic changes in healthcare delivery.

Strengths:

- It succinctly summarizes the study's findings and their implications for clinical practice and policy.

Limitations:

- The conclusions could be strengthened by offering more specific recommendations for future research directions, particularly in exploring effective interventions to reduce diagnostic delays.

General Comments:

- The study is significant in highlighting the multifaceted reasons behind the delay in diagnosing BD. It underscores the complexity of diagnosing BD and points towards areas for improvement in healthcare delivery and patient education.
- The use of thematic analysis enriches the narrative by identifying and elaborating on the key themes responsible for diagnostic delays.

Validity of Methods, Results, and Data Interpretation: The methodology is generally sound, and the thematic analysis approach is appropriate for the study's aims. However, the validity of the study could be enhanced by more detailed reporting on the methodological rigor, such as the process for resolving discrepancies during data extraction and the consideration of study quality in synthesizing results.

In conclusion, this study makes a significant contribution to understanding the delays in diagnosing BD. To strengthen the study further, the authors should consider elaborating on the methodology, especially regarding discrepancy resolution and the impact of study quality on the synthesis. Additionally, incorporating more detailed results, including specific statistics where possible, and discussing the influence of regional differences on the findings, would enhance the paper's comprehensiveness and applicability.

