

# A Service Evaluation of Referrals to the North Tyneside Community Treatment Team Querying a Diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder

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## Aims and hypothesis

The aim of this service evaluation was to assess how many patients referred from primary care with query bipolar disorder had a diagnosis of bipolar disorder. Our previous work (Round 1; 2014-15) showed that only 19.5% of referrals were given a diagnosis of bipolar disorder post-assessment by the community treatment team (CTT). As the referral numbers have increased significantly recently, we repeated our service evaluation with a larger referral number. Our hypothesis was that >19.5% of query bipolar disorder referrals would have a correct diagnosis of bipolar disorder after CTT assessment.

## Background

In recent years there has been an increase in primary care referrals to CTTs querying bipolar disorder. However, mood instability can be feature of several conditions and an incorrect diagnosis is likely to be associated with significant harm by inappropriate psychopharmacological treatment and a delay in starting other appropriate treatments.

## Methods

Primary Care referrals to the North Tyneside CTT from January to September 2018 were reviewed and those referred for query bipolar disorder were included in this evaluation. Most referrals were from GPs.

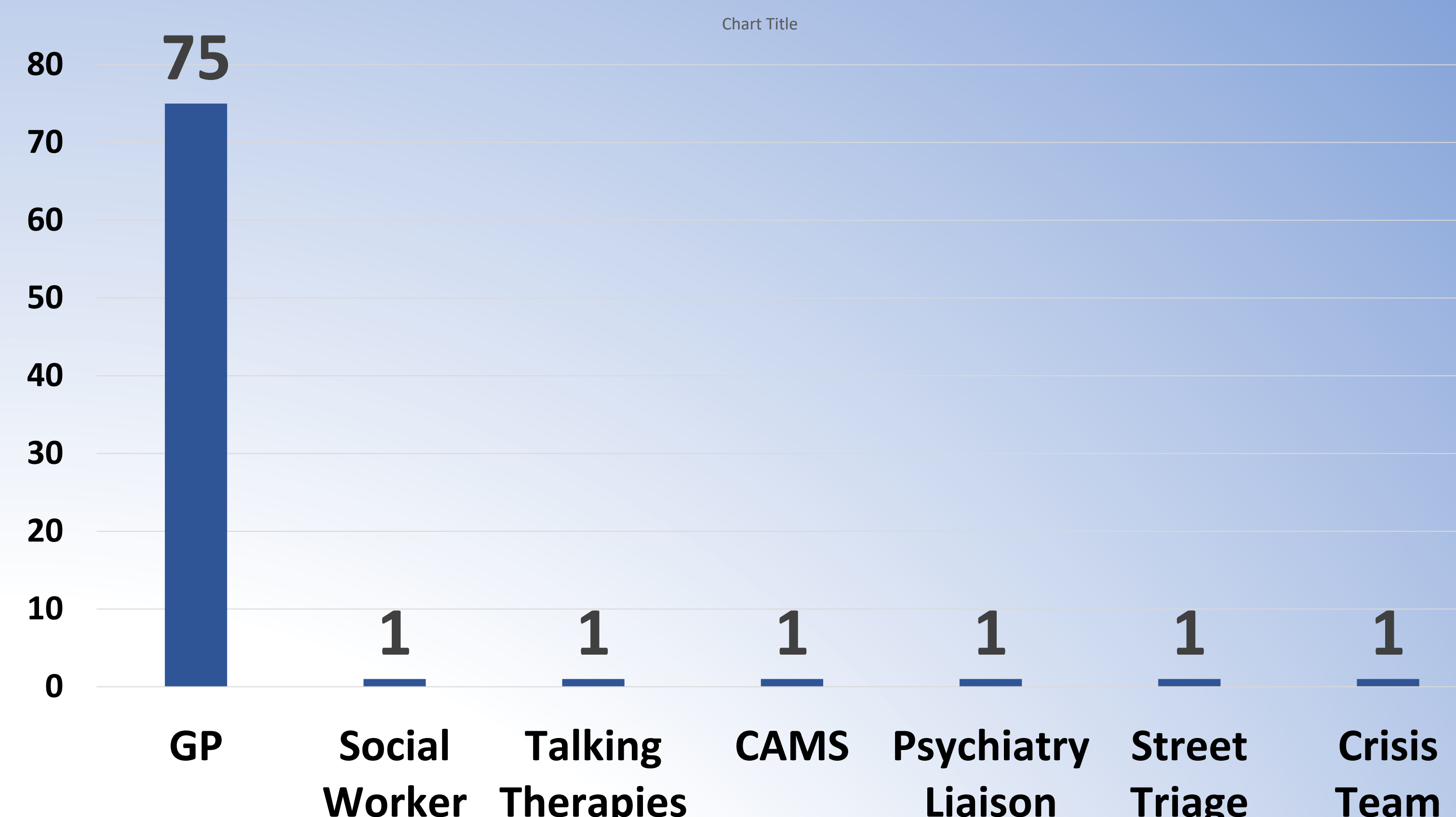
## Results

From Round 1 to 2, percentage of referrals querying bipolar disorder have marginally reduced from 23% to 20%. The number of patients with bipolar disorder diagnosis has increased from 19.5% (8/41) to 29.6% (24/81) from Round 1 to 2.

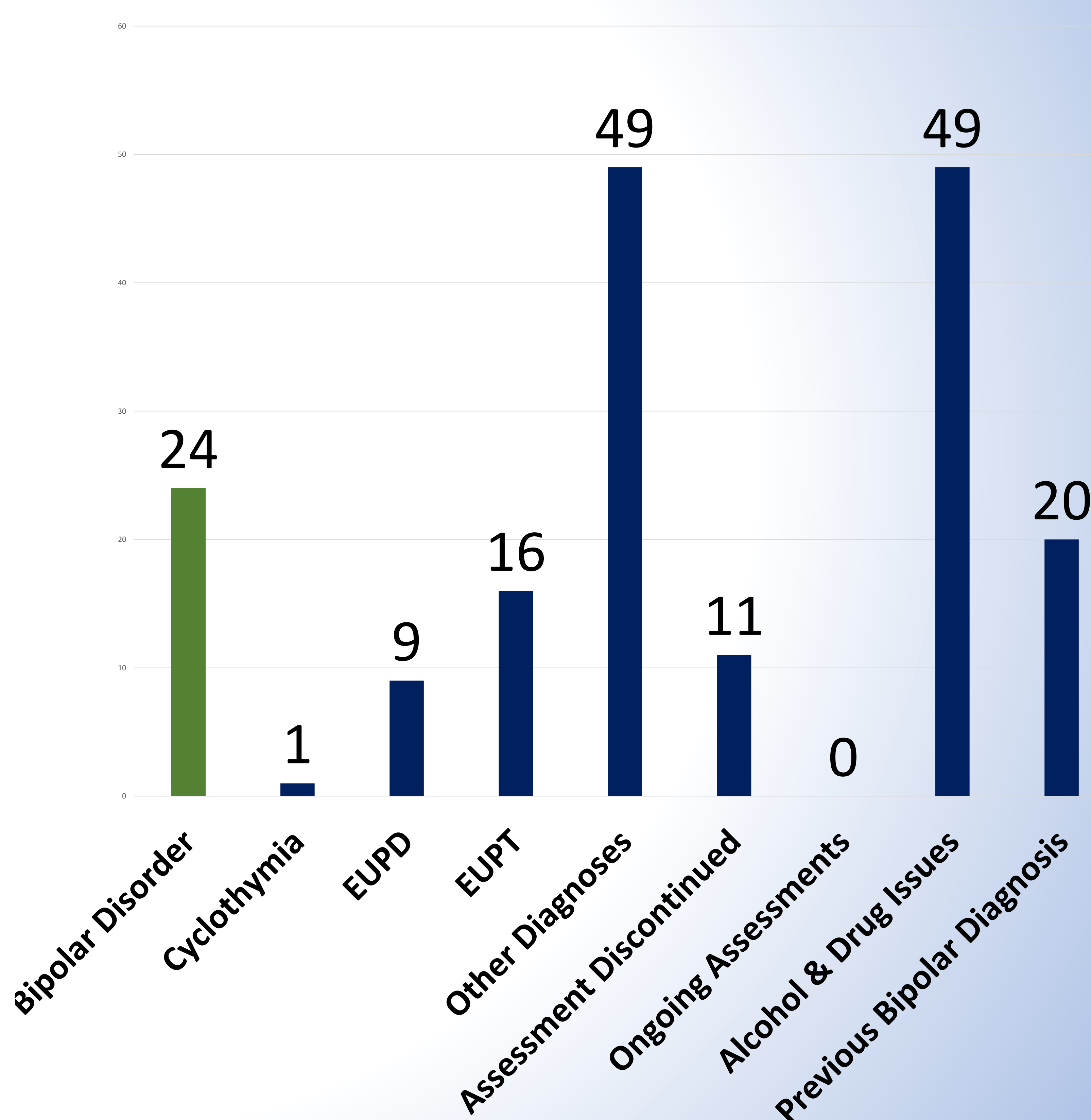
However, 4 (4/52; 8%) new diagnoses of bipolar disorder were made in Round 2 as compared to 4 (4/34; 12%) in Round 1. In Round 2, 46% (24/52) of new query bipolar disorder referrals were diagnosed with Emotionally unstable personality disorder or traits, with a similar percentage with other disorders.

## Conclusions

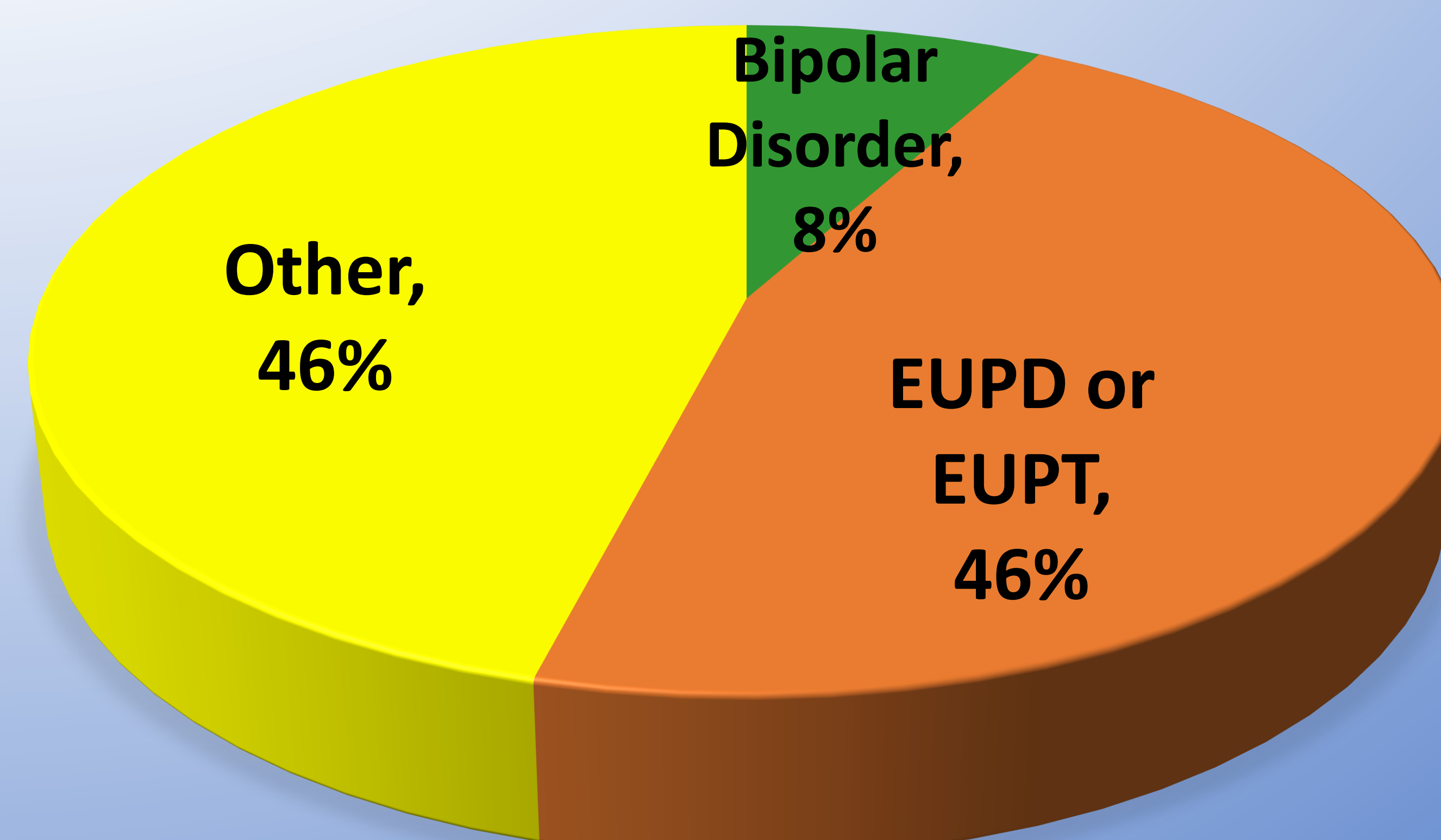
Literature suggests that there is an overall rise in suspicion of Bipolar Disorder as compared to 10 years ago. Our figures over the last 5 years show that number of referrals for query bipolar disorder have ranged between 20-23%. Although there appears a higher number of correct bipolar disorder diagnoses, many had a pre-existing diagnosis and the number of new bipolar disorder diagnoses remains low. Correct detection of EUPD/T as a differential diagnosis in some and a co-morbid diagnosis in others is a valid focus of primary care education whilst not forgetting to look for bipolar disorder using collateral history, mood disorder questionnaires (such as HCL-32) and mood diaries.



Number and source of each of the 81 referrals



NB: These are number of diagnoses rather than patients



52 referrals for New Query Bipolar Disorder