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National Education Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder

NEA-BPD

P. O. Box 974, Rye, New York 10580

Borderline Personality Disorder: Awareness Brings Hope

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is a serious mental illness that centers on the inability to manage emotions effectively. The symptoms include impulsivity, mood lability, rage, bodily self harm, suicide, chaotic relationships, fears of abandonment and substance abuse. Officially recognized in 1980 by the psychiatric community, BPD is at least two decades behind in research, treatment options, and family education compared to other major mental illnesses.

While some persons with BPD are high functioning in certain settings, their private lives may be in turmoil. Others are unable to work and require financial support. The high prevalence of BPD and its high personal, social, and economic toll make it a national public health challenge. And yet people do get better. Hope starts with awareness.

Prevalence in Adults

- 4 million American individuals have BPD (~ 2% of general public)
- BPD is more common than schizophrenia
- 20% of psychiatric hospital admissions have BPD (more than for major depression)

Suicide and Self Injury in Adults

- 10% of adults with BPD commit suicide
- a person with BPD has a suicide rate 400 times greater than the general public
- a young woman with BPD has a suicide rate 800 times greater than the general public
- 55-85% of adults with BPD self-injure their bodies

Prevalence and Suicide in Youth

- 33% of youth who commit suicide have features of BPD

Treatment Challenges

- no FDA-approved medication exists for BPD
- BPD can co-occur with other illnesses (e.g., 60% also have major depression)
- research-based therapies for BPD are not widely available
- a 30-yr-old woman with BPD typically has the medical profile of a woman in her 60s

Economic Impacts

- up to 40% of high users of mental health services have BPD
- over 50% of individuals are severely impaired in employability
- 12% of men and 28% of women in prison have BPD

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Source: Research presentations of NEA-BPD conferences 2002-2007