



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your article regarding the diagnosis of BPD in adolescents. I continue to be struck by the number of my colleagues across many mental health disciplines who decline to diagnose borderline personality in adolescents for all the reasons you describe. Consider the harm to youth who undergo rounds of pharmacologic therapy, non-specific psychotherapy, and other treatments of only modest use in BPD. A common scenario for me is parents, often themselves healthcare workers, who bring in a teenager who has 'failed' multiple treatments and is in despair. The diagnosis of BPD or emerging BPD can at once be liberating yet terrifying given the baggage associated with it. I wonder if targeted education towards our clinical colleagues would help dispel myths about BPD and encourage thoughtful diagnosis and treatment where appropriate. I wonder too if the patient voice, especially from youth who have benefited from treatments such as DBT, would reassure clinicians that they are not doing harm by making a responsible diagnosis.

Again, thank you for writing an editorial that I hope will positively influence our colleagues and benefit patients.

Matthew Chow, MD, FRCPC
Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist
Vancouver, BC

Reply

Dear Dr. Chow,

Thank you for writing and sharing your clinical insights. You very succinctly highlight two actionable items that will help promote an openness to BPD screening an diagnosis amongst clinicians working with youth. The first being targeted education that provides evidence to address the practical concerns of diagnosticians working in busy clinical settings. The second, the voice of consumers and patients. You and I know that it is helpful for most patients because we hear their voices in follow up appointments. Creating opportunities for youth to share their experiences about mental health treatment would help physicians as much as the youth themselves - particularly in regards to the added benefit of personality disorder diagnosis in young people.

Khrista Boylan
Editor