**Introduction**

- Bipolar disorder and borderline personality disorder are commonly comorbid.
- Previous studies have shown that bipolar disorder with comorbid borderline personality disorder follows a different clinical course to bipolar disorder without comorbid borderline personality disorder including an earlier age of onset and increased risk of self-harm and/or suicide.
- However, previous studies have had small sample sizes, examined borderline personality only as a categorical disorder not dimensionally, and very few have directly compared the prevalence rates of borderline personality disorder in bipolar I disorder and bipolar II disorder.

**Method**

**Sample**

- Sample recruited to the Bipolar Disorder Research Network (BDRN), a UK-wide research programme investigating the aetiology of bipolar disorder
- Participants recruited systematically (via mental health centres) and non-systematically (via advertisements)
- Analysis conducted on a subset of sample with a DSM-IV diagnosis of bipolar I and II disorder who were assessed for presence/severity of borderline personality traits (n=1447)

**Measurement of borderline personality traits**

- The self-report Borderline Evaluation of Severity over Time (BEST) questionnaire (Pfohl & Blum, 1997) was used to assess borderline personality traits.
- The BEST questionnaire is comprised of 12 items and has a total score between 12-60.
- Altman Mania Scale (AMS) and Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) questionnaires were completed at the same time as BEST to measure current mood state.

**Lifetime clinical characteristics**

- Lifetime clinical data were obtained by a trained interviewer using a semi-structured interview (Schedules for Clinical Assessment in Neuropsychiatry) and review of medical case-notes.

**Statistical analysis**

- Total BEST scores were compared between the BPI and BPII groups using Mann-Whitney U tests. The frequency of each individual BEST item was compared between groups using chi-squared tests.
- Linear regression was used to explore lifetime clinical predictors of total BEST score within the BPI and BPII groups separately.

**Aims**

1. To examine the presence and severity of borderline personality traits in a large, representative UK sample of individuals with bipolar disorder.
2. To explore the impact of the severity of borderline personality traits on the course of bipolar disorder.

**Results**

After adjusting for potential confounders (AMS and BDI scores, age at interview and sex), the BPII group had a significantly higher total BEST score than the BPI group (see Table 1) and 9/12 BEST individual items were significantly more frequently reported by the BPII group than the BPI group (see Figure 2).

**Conclusions**

- Borderline personality traits are common in bipolar disorder; they are more common and more severe in BPII compared to BPI.
- Borderline trait severity was associated with earlier onset of illness, alcohol misuse and suicidal behaviour in bipolar disorder.

**Limitations**

- The BEST questionnaire is a retrospective, self-reported measure therefore data may be subject to response and recall bias.

**Implications and Future Research**

- Clinicians should be vigilant for borderline personality traits irrespective of whether criteria for borderline personality disorder diagnosis are met, particularly in those with bipolar II disorder and younger age of bipolar onset.
- Our findings require replication in an independent sample, ideally using an objective measure of borderline personality traits and a longitudinal prospective study design.

**Table 1. Comparison of Total BEST Scores between BPI and BPII groups.**

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<tr>
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<th>BPI</th>
<th>BPII</th>
<th>p Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median (IQR)</td>
<td>27 (19)</td>
<td>36 (18)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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**Figure 1. Summary of sample.**

**Figure 2. Prevalence of individual BEST items in the BPI and BPII groups.**

**Table 2. Lifetime risk of suicide attempt in BPI and BPII groups.**

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<th>BPI</th>
<th>BPII</th>
<th>p Value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lifetime history of suicide attempt</td>
<td>BPI: B 4.500, 95% CI 3.047, 5.953, p=0.001</td>
<td>BPII: B 3.384, 95% CI 1.357, 5.412, p=0.001</td>
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**Table 3. Lifetime history of alcohol misuse in BPI and BPII groups.**

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<tr>
<td>Lifetime history of alcohol misuse</td>
<td>BPI: B 3.683, 95% CI 2.191, 5.175, p&lt;0.001</td>
<td>BPII: B 2.527, 95% CI 0.433, 4.622, p=0.018</td>
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