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MATERNAL TRANSMISSION OF BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER (BPD): A PROSPECTIVE COMMUNITY-BASED COHORT STUDY

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Objective: This longitudinal, community based cohort study assessed the mother-offspring transmission of BPD and examined whether maternal parenting styles and offspring temperament are associated risk factors.

Methods: At baseline 315 mothers and 414 offspring of the general population were investigated. Five years later the offspring were followed up and diagnostic interviews were carried out. BPD risk in children of BPD-mothers was compared to the BPD risk in children of healthy mothers. The contribution of an anxious-impulsive temperament in offspring and invalidating maternal parenting style to the prediction of BPD features was analyzed.

Results: Offspring of mothers with BPD were 8.5 times more likely to exhibit the diagnosis of BPD than offspring of healthy mothers. Prediction analyses suggest that mother-offspring transmission of BPD may be partially mediated by reciprocal transactions between a vulnerable temperament and an overprotective maternal parenting style.

Conclusions: Given that offspring of mothers with BPD are not only at heightened familial risk of BPD but also other mental disorders, specificity of factors that are shared between mothers and their offspring is questioned. Early prevention needs to be provided to this high-risk group, especially if there are additional risk factors, as the transaction between vulnerable temperament and maladaptive parenting.