

Spectrum 2021



Feedback



Spectrum has received some excellent feedback throughout the year about a range of its programs.

Here is what some people have said:

Family and Carer Workshops

"The presenters are thoroughly informed, wonderfully warm, professional and very approachable."

Treatment

"Spectrum has given me the skills to light a fire within myself, so I am able to create a better lit path to see myself through the dark times."

"Thank you to you all, I still consider myself so lucky to have been a client at Spectrum."

Workforce Development

"Excellent. Passionate, caring trainers who obviously have a 'mission'."



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38
individual
training events
completed

584
health
workers
in attendance
at courses

**2021
snapshot**

Almost
10,000
hours
of direct clinical
services to clients

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Welcome



David Plunkett
Chief Executive
Eastern Health




Paul Leyden
Acting Executive
Director,
Clinical Operations,
Surgery,
Women and Children,
Mental Health,
Medical Imaging and
Statewide Services
(SWMMS)

We look back on some of Spectrum's achievements in 2020–21

Spectrum continues to be at the forefront of personality disorder treatment, research and workforce development at a state and national level. Over the past 12 months Spectrum has made some significant achievements and there are many exciting opportunities ahead.

Congratulations to all Spectrum staff on their ongoing leadership and exceptional work and to all the collaborators, consumers and carers who partner with us.

Spectrum uses its advanced skills, knowledge and expertise to ensure that community members impacted by personality disorder have access to the best possible treatment, care and support. It uses its wide-ranging knowledge of personality disorder to design, develop and implement new approaches across public, private and primary health sectors, and conduct translational research that helps build better models of care to improve client outcomes.

 This year, Spectrum successfully implemented its national training initiative that recognises its unique position at the forefront of workforce development in responding to personality disorder. The initiative, funded by the National Mental Health Commission, involved the delivery of multiple training courses in all Australian capital cities and jurisdictions. The program was co-developed with carers and consumers from the Australian BPD Foundation.

Doing this in the context of COVID-19 state border restrictions has been a remarkable achievement. This work supports improved services and care for consumers and the ongoing development of a strong and capable workforce at a national level.

Spectrum's national research credentials continue to grow and contribute to its admirable reputation for developing solutions to complex questions concerning personality disorder and for building the evidence base for best practice. Government at local, state and federal level continue to seek advice from Spectrum that informs policy which, in turn, influences the service delivery models that are implemented and delivered nationally.

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System will have a profound impact on the redevelopment of mental health services. Spectrum has an important role to play in ensuring that responses to personality disorder and trauma are the best they can be.

We are proud of the services provided by Spectrum and look forward to its continuing contribution to the delivery of the Eastern Health strategic initiatives of Healthcare Excellence, Leading in Research and Innovation, and Leading in Learning in the area of personality disorder.

Introduction



Anthony Denham
Program Director
Statewide Services
Eastern Health



A/Prof Sathya Rao
Executive Clinical Director
Spectrum

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Spectrum has continued to thrive. Our dedicated and passionate staff have successfully adapted to the changes in delivery of care to support our clients, whilst also progressing significant work in the areas of research and workforce development.

Over the last 12 months Spectrum has continued to provide highly valued clinical expertise, secondary consultation and treatment for complex clinical presentations, delivered training and participated in educational and research conferences across all Australian states and territories (eg. clinical opinions to Western Australia, Northern Territory, New South Wales, ACT and Tasmania. Keynote presentations to Queensland and South Australia).

Building on its experience of more than 20 years of working with clients experiencing childhood and developmental trauma, Spectrum has adapted to embrace changes in the World Health Organisation International Classification of Diseases (ICD11). The article in this report on the treatment available for Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a demonstration of some of the great work of the team in this area.

This year Spectrum has also expanded its research and workforce development capacity. This is in recognition of the increasing demand for workforce development and training in Victoria and across the nation, as well as the need for translational clinical research and innovation of personality disorder models of care that are suitable for Australian health care settings. One highlight was the launch of the book *Borderline Personality Disorder: A Practical Guide for General Practitioners*.

Spectrum also made some changes to its organisational structure in order to better support its strategic objectives and future opportunities. This includes adapting to changes in the field of personality disorder treatment and the anticipated opportunities to come from the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Mental Health in Victoria. In particular, Spectrum is well positioned to inform and make an important contribution to the establishment of the proposed State Wide Specialist Trauma Service included in the Royal Commission recommendations.

Along with our exceptionally skilled team we are assisted by many professional partners and leaders in their field. Spectrums' annual conference for 2021 was Mentalization Based Treatment (MBT) themed, as well as the associated workshops with Prof Anthony Bateman, who is clearly recognised as a world leader in this area. Along with Prof Anthony Bateman, we are very fortunate to have very high quality supervisors such as Prof Alan Fruzzetti (US) and Prof Lois Choi Kane (US) who support our clinical program. A/Prof Josephine Beatson continues to provide valuable input as a Senior Clinical Advisor and this year we are privileged to have Prof Bruce Singh, an eminent leader in mental health, join Spectrum as a Senior Clinical Advisor to our program.

We are also fortunate to have the support of people with Lived Experience, Spectrum Leadership Team and Eastern Health more broadly. And once again, we thank all of the Spectrum team for their contribution, making this another successful year.



Dr Kieran Connolly
Associate Program
Director
Statewide Services
Eastern Health



Dr Lukas Cheney
Psychiatrist
Spectrum



Cathryn Pilcher
Acting Associate
Clinical Director
Spectrum

Voices of people with lived experience amplified at Spectrum

This year Spectrum has continued to amplify the voices of people with lived experience of personality disorder – both consumers and carers – by implementing a range of initiatives that involve them in developing our services in treatment, research and workforce development.

Lived Experience Panel

This year has seen the development of Spectrum's Lived Experience Consultation Panel coming to fruition and the panel now meet regularly.

A huge amount of work has gone into the development of this panel, which includes a group of people with diverse lived experiences of personality disorder and is supported by Cathryn Pilcher, Jo Veltkamp and Rita Brown.

Cathryn and Jo bring clinical oversight to the group and Rita provides the perspective of someone working from a personal lived experience of supporting someone with BPD.

The panel has made incredible progress already, developing a brochure to explain BPD to those who are newly diagnosed based on what would have been helpful for them at the time of diagnosis, which will be widely available next year. They have also helped inform revisions of various client forms and delivering a professional development session on utilising the lived experience to our staffing group. They are increasingly becoming involved in all other facets of our work.

"I am in awe of the generosity of the Lived Experience Panel in their willingness to share with us their experiences so that we can learn and grow together for the benefit of everyone," said Rita.

Submission of carer research to publishers

Rita and Jo continue to run peer informed and led workshops for carers on a regular basis. These sessions are really valuable for the participants, as for many it is the first opportunity to speak openly about what is happening in their lives and to realise they are not alone.

During 2021, Jo and Rita - with the support of the research team - finalised a paper evaluating the benefit experienced by carers from a single session short term intervention. This was an all-day workshop and a 2.5 hour information session. The paper has been submitted to journals for publishing and is currently being reviewed.



"I am in awe of the generosity of the Lived Experience Panel in their willingness to share with us their experiences so that we can learn and grow together for the benefit of everyone."

– Rita Brown



Presentation to RANZCP congress in Hobart

Rita also presented on the research as part of a symposium, *'Exploring the value of Peer Inclusion in the Management of BPD'*, to the RANZCP Congress held in Hobart this year. The symposium also included a presentation by a person with lived experience of BPD and a researcher.

The audience were engaged and participated in the lively and informative discussion afterwards.

"It's great to see greater value being placed on the inclusion of lived experience voices, both consumer and carers," said Rita.

Lived experience in our publications

Rita was also part of the team that reviewed/proofread and edited a Participant Handbook for our national training strategy. She provided an important non-clinical perspective, which greatly contributed to the development of this resource.

We are incredibly proud of all the work that has been done this year to include lived experiences in the work that we do and look forward to expanding on this strong foundation in the future.

"It's great to see greater value being placed on the inclusion of lived experience voices, both consumer and carers."

– Rita Brown

Spectrum is a Centre for Clinical Excellence in Personality Disorders

spectrum
Personality Disorder Service

Treatment

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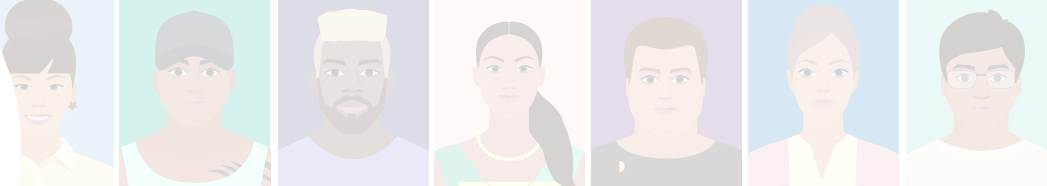
Training

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In place of surviving, I am now finally living

By Léa Runas

For the longest time, I would wake up each day stuck in the darkest corners of my mind, and it was always a fear as to when I would snap and have another episode, through Spectrum I learnt that this was due to a lack of emotional regulation.

Learning the skills that I have allows me to function and manage each day without feeling like I am bound to lose control and yet for the times I feel like I don't have any, I am now able to show myself the compassion and patience essential to get through the challenges that come my way, it's like becoming my own cheerleader and support person and for the very first time in my life I am able to speak to myself as gently and compassionately as I would to anyone else who needs it when they are struggling.

Spectrum has not only helped me realise that I can find and create safe places in the world for myself but also and most

significantly in my own mind, almost as if instead of trying to seek out the light at the end of the tunnel, Spectrum has given me the skills to light a fire within myself, so I am able to create a better lit path to see myself through the dark times.

For the very first, and what has felt like the longest time in my life, I am just enjoying the journey regardless of what comes, and in place of surviving, I am now finally living.

I only have the very best things to say about the DBT program Spectrum offers, as there is no doubt in how much it has changed not just my life but me as a person. Just before I started treatment, I could no longer see the light at the end of tunnel, I was at my wits end. While I was ready and desperate for anything to change how I felt, I wouldn't have been able to do it without the support, knowledge and utmost respect and trustworthiness of those who guided and supported me through one of the best experiences of my life.





The skills I have learned are setting me free

By Anonymous

I count myself as being so fortunate and I am ever so grateful for the time I spent at Spectrum and for the highly skilled and approachable clinical psychologist and mental health nurse who became my team for the two programs I was accepted in.

The progress I made with my clinical psychologist was extraordinary, and I can't imagine how much it would set me up for the rest of my life if the programs were much longer in length.

I am so grateful to her and for the strategies I was taught, it also helped me to "wake up" to a more aware sense of self, I still use the skills that I learned in the ACT program, they are the one thing that I know will work and help set me free in difficult times.

From the intake and assessment with the team, through to the ACT program and my time with my main clinician, as a client, I cannot fault the process or the staff, reception staff included, everybody I interacted with is so highly skilled, I think not only patients but other professionals could learn a lot from this talented group of people.

The only downside is the limited time we are given; six months with my clinical psychologist and a four week ACT program. It would be highly beneficial for me to go for a longer period of time but nonetheless it helped me more than any other therapy I have taken part in (and I've been in therapy since 2007).

Thank you to you all, I still consider myself so lucky to have been a client at Spectrum.



Complex PTSD – clinic expansion at the forefront of treating new diagnosis

Spectrum is at the forefront of developing specialist treatment clinics, training packages and research for the newly recognised Complex PTSD (C- PTSD).

C-PTSD is a far more severe, complex and intractable syndrome than other forms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Spectrum is developing specialised treatments to address its symptoms and support the recovery of individuals who meet its criteria. This includes the expansion of two of its clinics to meet the needs of individuals with C-PTSD.

The current landscape

Following the final report of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System there is strong interest and enthusiasm for the improvement of treatment, research and training around all forms of psychological trauma across all levels of the Victorian mental health sector.

Victoria currently has very limited availability of treatment for C-PTSD either privately or within public mental health, and Spectrum is excited about new opportunities in this area as part of the planned State Trauma Service including expansions to its existing Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and Mentalization Based Treatment (MBT) clinics.

DBT-PTSD clinician training

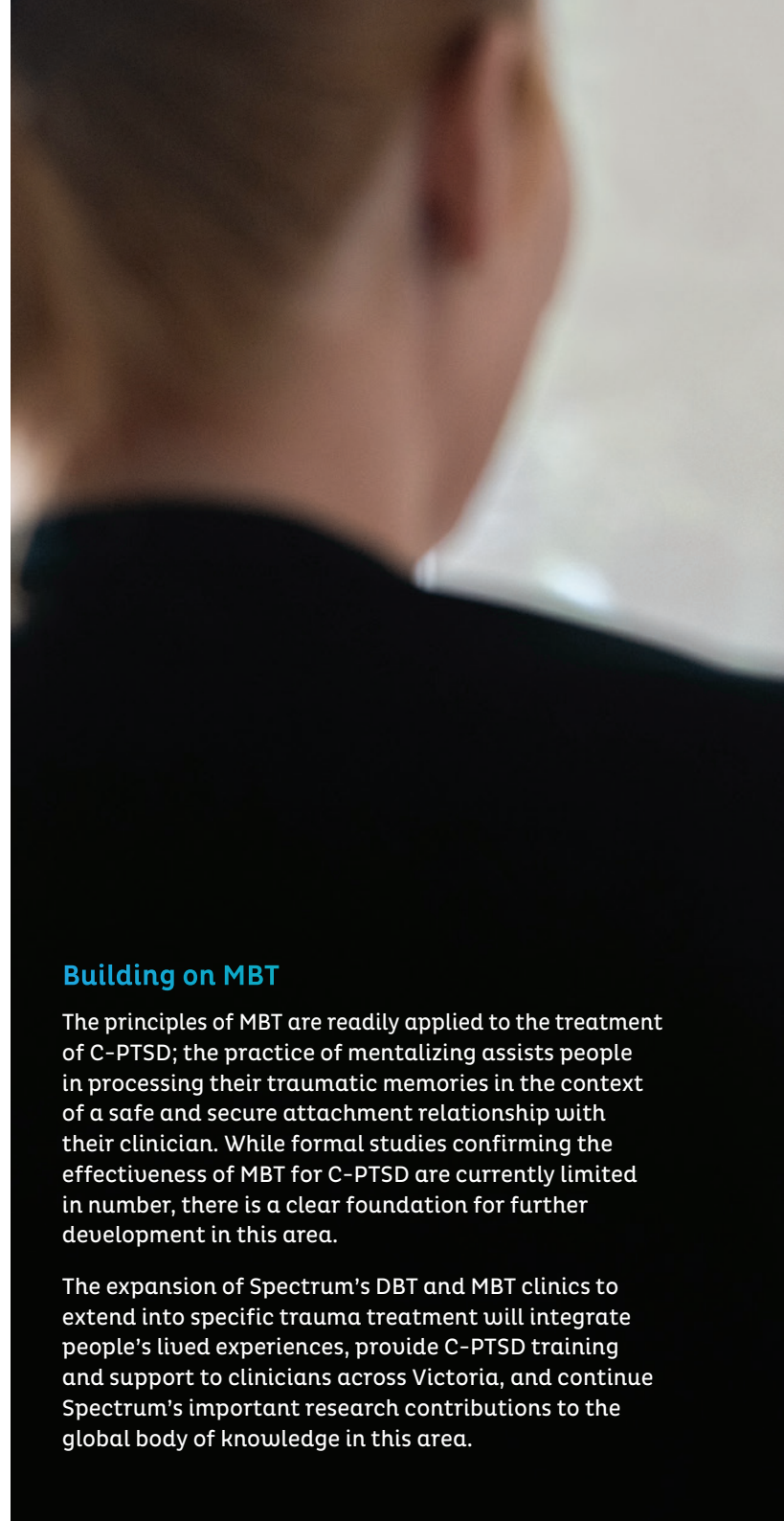
As part of our commitment to continued learning, Spectrum's DBT clinicians are currently engaged in specialist DBT-PTSD training with internationally renowned Dr Martin Bohus' team in Germany, and are developing a DBT-PTSD treatment program with supervision from experts at McLean Hospital in Boston.

This is a 45 session program which incorporates elements from DBT with prolonged exposure, whilst also working with high risk behaviours the person experiences, risk of treatment drop-out and dissociation.

Building on MBT

The principles of MBT are readily applied to the treatment of C-PTSD; the practice of mentalizing assists people in processing their traumatic memories in the context of a safe and secure attachment relationship with their clinician. While formal studies confirming the effectiveness of MBT for C-PTSD are currently limited in number, there is a clear foundation for further development in this area.

The expansion of Spectrum's DBT and MBT clinics to extend into specific trauma treatment will integrate people's lived experiences, provide C-PTSD training and support to clinicians across Victoria, and continue Spectrum's important research contributions to the global body of knowledge in this area.





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Offering more flexible treatment options - ACT therapy



"I've learned a lot about experiencing emotions. I found that I had very little understanding of experiencing emotions in a normal way, or allowing emotions and sensations to be felt. ACT has really helped me understand and experience more emotion, thought and sensations."

– Wise Moments participant

Spectrum has developed a stepped-care Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) clinic offering brief interventions for personality disorder and trauma. Many people with a diagnosis of BPD have expressed their interest in briefer treatments with greater flexibility to suit their needs; this new model of care gives our clients this without compromising on care.

How does the model work?

Spectrum now offers three brief ACT treatments for personality disorder and trauma within a stepped-care model:

Wise Moments: 4 individual sessions

Supports different experiences of emotion including painful emotion over four sessions.

Wise Experiences: 20 individual sessions

Consolidates the work on emotion within Wise Moments and can also address issues with identity or relationships with others.

Wise Choices: 10 group sessions

Provides a peer-focused forum for discussion and consolidation of the experiences in Wise Moments and Wise Experiences.

Over 50 people have completed the Wise Moments program in the last 12 months.

What is ACT therapy?

ACT is a transdiagnostic therapy that is ideally suited to brief (four weeks to six months) interventions. This is in contrast to more specialist BPD treatments which traditionally have been designed for longer treatment durations of 12 to 18 months. In contrast, ACT has successfully been offered for a range of conditions over shorter periods.

The three ACT interventions at Spectrum have been designed to increase abilities to notice, observe and experience emotion, including painful emotions. A focus on present moment awareness organises the client's thoughts, helping them increase capacity to notice, observe and experience emotion. In ACT terms, this is referred to as the 'observer self'. The aim of the three interventions is to offer people a different emotional experience by addressing avoidance of painful emotion in session.

Spectrum ACT clinicians share a commitment to offering a different way of relating to emotion rapidly and within the first therapy sessions. Wise Moments (four sessions over four weeks) is particularly designed to meet this goal. Clinician and client experiences suggest that it is possible to experience emotion differently even within an extremely brief four-week ACT intervention.

The Wise Choices and Wise Experiences interventions then build on this new experience for those people who feel that further ACT work is currently right for them. ACT brief interventions will be an important part of the work Spectrum does in the future with the hope that many more people can experience positive changes in how they relate to emotion relatively rapidly.



Increasing Emergency Department understanding of BPD

In this landmark project, Spectrum and Eastern Health Emergency Departments collaborated on the creation of the 'Care Pathways for Management of BPD at Eastern Health Emergency Departments' program which focused on increasing the ED teams understanding of BPD and its symptoms to improve the ED experience for people living with BPD. This program is truly representative of Eastern Health's motto 'Great care everywhere, every time' and our focus on clients first.

How did it work?

This program involved creating resources, facilitating the exchange of experiences and knowledge and featured the prominent involvement of the Lived Experience Consultant which really helped to bring the teaching to life.

This included:

- Creation of educational videos
- Provision of an in-person seminar series for ED staff
- Development of a collaborative podcast that provided an exchange of experiences between a Lived Experience worker and clinicians from ED and Spectrum
- Creation of an easily accessible resource list
- Contribution to a professional symposium, aimed at increasing awareness of symptoms, treatment and required principles of care

Six educational videos were created which focused on disseminating accurate evidence-based information, dispelling myths, and equipping viewers with effective methods of communication. The focus on the person with BPD was central to every aspect of the work.



It is our hope that these videos will become accessible to all Eastern Health Emergency Department staff as part of their orientation and essential learning package.

Spectrum also contributed to the creation of a podcast which facilitated a conversation between various clinicians of the ED and the Lived Experience Consultant.

This exchange highlighted the importance of compassion, consideration and transparency as well as a clear understanding of living with BPD. Spectrum was also asked to take part in a Symposium for ED clinicians as part of an expert panel discussion.

The ongoing impact

One of the most significant impacts this project has already had was the acknowledgement of a shift of perspective of ED clinicians towards working with people with BPD and a renewed sense of hope and compassion.

One of the clinicians in the program even said, "It was great to hear the eloquent perspective of a person with lived experience. It directly helps improve the ED experience for both clients and staff", which is a tremendous outcome.

You can read more about the experience of our Lived Experience Consultant who worked on this program on page 22.

"It was great to hear the eloquent perspective of a person with lived experience. It directly helps improve the ED experience for both clients and staff."

– ED clinician



Condensing treatment and delivering great outcomes: new intensive group program

Participant engagement with the program was high with around **97%** attending at least **80%** of the sessions.

The Spectrum 10-week Intensive Group Program (IGP) is an innovative approach to the treatment of BPD that was developed and trialled in recent years, with our findings being published this year. The program has had a very positive impact and has shown efficacy across many BPD relevant outcomes.

Our research indicates that the most effective treatment for BPD is structured psychotherapy. The Spectrum IGP is based on that model and a 'common factors' treatment approach that incorporates key elements of specialist BPD treatments.

The paper was published in Evidence-Based Mental Health (EBMH) which is a peer reviewed journal covering clinically relevant research in mental health and psychiatry.

How the program worked

The novel aspect of this program is that it condenses treatment contact hours for a two-year psychotherapy program into just ten weeks (eight hours per week). The group format assists with program efficacy as well as maximising the number of patients who can be offered treatment.

Forty-three participants were enrolled in the trial, many experiencing severe BPD symptomatology, and they completed pre and post self-report questionnaires asking them about a range of BPD relevant outcomes.

What were the outcomes for clients?

The IGP intervention demonstrated statistically significant improvements in a range of outcomes including:

- BPD symptom severity
- Depression
- Trait anxiety
- Emotion regulation
- General health
- Hopefulness
- Self -compassion
- Anger control



Several of these improvements had moderate to large effect, greatly contributing to improved wellbeing for the clients involved. Suicide attempts decreased for 12 out of the 13 participants who had a suicide attempt in the previous year; none attempted suicide during the 10-week program.

Participant engagement with the program was high, with the vast majority, around 97%, attending at least 80% of sessions, suggesting that participants who completed the program were motivated to attend consistently and were able to tolerate the frequency, content, group format, and length of these sessions.

Results bring hope for future programs

The findings of this study support wider research indicating brief treatment based on a 'common factors' approach can be an extremely beneficial option for people with BPD.

The broader implementation of this brief program, would be well-suited for inclusion within a stepped-care approach or as an initial intervention for people with more severe and complex presentations.

Most importantly, it would also increase the capacity of mental health services to meet the needs of a larger proportion of people who experience BPD. We look forward to disseminating this program more broadly in the coming year.

Study identifies BPD training gap in psychiatry education

Spectrum's recent study investigating the confidence of psychiatry trainees in meeting the needs of people experiencing BPD has highlighted an urgent need to enhance psychiatry training and supervision in skills related to the diagnosis, management and treatment of BPD.

We know that training is critical for building a workforce that is equipped to assess, manage and treat BPD. Until now there has been limited data investigating the adequacy of professional training for psychiatrists in Australia to work with people with BPD.

As part of our work to improve outcomes for people affected by BPD, we examined the confidence of Victorian psychiatry trainees in working with people diagnosed with BPD in comparison to their confidence in treating schizophrenia. We chose schizophrenia as a comparison as BPD and schizophrenia are both serious and chronic mental health conditions with similar prevalence, morbidity, mortality and burden of disease.

To run this investigation, we created a bespoke self-report survey for Victorian psychiatry trainees which measured their confidence in the assessment, management and treatment of BPD in comparison with schizophrenia. Trainees were also asked to reflect on their future career direction, specifically their prospective willingness to work with patients diagnosed with schizophrenia or BPD after achieving fellowship.

Almost a quarter of the total trainee population completed the survey, including almost one third of final stage trainees.

What the results tell us

Overall, confidence scores of respondents with respect to BPD were significantly lower in comparison with schizophrenia. This was true for assessment, management and treatment of BPD. Trainees also reported being less willing to work with people with BPD in comparison with schizophrenia. It was notable that trainees reported receiving less adequate supervision and training in relation to BPD than for schizophrenia.

Deficiencies in professional training appear to play a significant role in trainees' lack of confidence and willingness to work with people diagnosed with BPD. While most trainees expressed a desire to work therapeutically with people with BPD, perceived deficiencies in training had left them feeling incapable of doing so. Almost all trainees requested an increase in training opportunities in psychotherapy relating to BPD.

An urgent need to fill the training gap

The results of this study suggest an urgent need to enhance psychiatry training and supervision in skills related to the diagnosis, management and treatment of BPD. A large body of evidence shows that BPD is responsive to psychotherapy treatment. Most psychiatrists are aware that specialised treatments such as Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) are effective for BPD. What may be less commonly known is that generalist or 'common factor' approaches appear to be equally effective for most patients.

While it is perhaps unrealistic to expect that all trainees will achieve competence in a specialised, evidence-based psychotherapy treatment such as DBT, routine training in a generalised 'common factors' approach is feasible and can be delivered by general psychiatrists and we will be advocating for this approach in the coming year.



Delivering great experience through high quality training

In the past year, Spectrum's Workforce Development team have continued to deliver exceptional, high-quality training to the Australian workforce, increasing their capacity and knowledge to support people with personality disorder, particularly BPD.

A large number of workshops have been delivered in the last year covering a range of topics including:

- Foundation training for working with people with BPD
- Dialectical Behaviour Therapy for BPD (Introduction, In Action, Family Intervention, Intermediate)
- Mentalization-based treatment for BPD
- Office-based treatment of people with BPD for GPs and psychiatrists
- Working with crises associated with BPD
- Working with BPD in an inpatient setting
- Learning more about BPD: For families and friends

Looking forward

With the release of the Royal Commission's 65 recommendations to transform Victoria's mental health system in early 2021, Spectrum's Workforce Development Team's focus over the next few years is to build the capacity of the workforce to align with the future service delivery approaches.

Some of the Royal Commission's priority capabilities include working with families, carers and supporters; understanding and responding to trauma; working effectively with complexity as well as understanding, preventing and responding to mental health crises and suicide. These are capabilities that Spectrum's Workforce Development Team are well equipped to respond to.



"I think Spectrum cover a great range of topics and I am looking forward to attending more."



"I'm definitely going to look at the other training provided by Spectrum."



"Really informative training. Engaging and knowledgeable facilitators."



"I have been to a lot of online training over the last year and that was the best I have attended."

Continued positive feedback

The face to face and online workshops have been attended by people from a variety of professions including workers from Area Mental Health Services, allied health and community support services and positive feedback has been received throughout.



"Always helps enormously when the facilitators are clinicians with current hand-on experience."

Building the expertise of the mental health workforce across Victoria



Spectrum and its partners have successfully completed the first stage of its four year Personality Disorder Initiative (PDI). The PDI is an important initiative in helping Victorians living with personality disorder, by helping build the capability and expertise of the general mental health workforce across the state.

The pilot program

The partnership between Spectrum and the State Government has successfully completed its pilot program across six Victorian Mental Health Services:

- Alfred Health
- Monash Health
- Northern Health
- Barwon Health
- Goulburn Valley Health
- Forensicare

Stage one of the PDI involved service development in all six Area Mental Health Services, which the clinicians were all intrinsically involved in with the support of the Spectrum clinicians. There was an intensive structured training and consultation program with Spectrum, and over the year the PDI clinicians began to develop and deliver this training both within the PDI framework and to their wider mental health services. These clinicians have made significant progress in their Area Mental Health Services to build the skill and capability of their workforce to provide more effective treatment for people with personality disorders.

Graduation

We completed stage one with a graduation ceremony for all of the clinicians involved in the initiative, as well as the Spectrum clinicians and project team. Certificates were awarded to mark their completion of stage one of the project and participation in the intensive training that the Spectrum PDI team provided.

Stage two begins

Stage two commenced with fortnightly professional development sessions featuring case presentations from our partner services and a Spectrum clinician. Further to this we saw the continuation of the collaborative work with the six Area Mental Health Services and Spectrum to continue to build and develop capacity in the workforce through the provision of treatments, supervision, secondary consultations and training.

We have had some excellent feedback from clinicians including:

"I have found the PDI an intellectually stimulating experience with having access to a wide variety of expertise and knowledge from a diverse range of theoretical bases. It is rare working in public mental health to have such an opportunity and I have valued being part of such an ambitious initiative. I have met some inspiring people along the way and my practice is forever changed, because of it. Thank you!"

– Nicole Sydenham
Specialist personality disorder clinician,
Barwon Health

"It's been a pleasure and a privilege to contribute to the Northern Area Mental Health Service's (PDS) provision of specialist mental health support to the diverse people they serve."

– Anonymous

National Training Strategy - crucial face-to-face training continues during COVID-19 pandemic

Over 300 clinicians have attended the 'Borderline Personality Disorder Core Competency Workshops' in face-to-face sessions across the country, despite the difficult task of working with constantly changing COVID-19 lockdowns and travel restrictions. These workshops are part of the crucial work that Spectrum provide to improve the capacity for health care workers to work with people with BPD and be inclusive of families.

Why face-to-face?

While Spectrum has welcomed the opportunity of online training over the last 18 months, there are some instances where face-to-face just works more effectively. Delivering BPD Core Competency workshops in-person, ensured that there were opportunities for participant interaction in activities and role plays, in depth group discussions and the provision of immediate feedback from trainers.

It also provided opportunities to address misinformation and stigma about BPD and shift any of the participants' hesitancy to work with people with BPD.

The training team for this project - Lukas Cheney, Cathryn Pilcher, Sathya Rao, Peter Smith, and Marianne Weddell - are to be commended for their commitment and passion to deliver the workshops across the country during very challenging circumstances.



- Melbourne
- Alice Springs
- Brisbane
- Bunbury
- Darwin
- Port Macquarie
- Sydney
- Townsville
- Perth
- Adelaide
- Hobart
- Launceston
- Canberra
- Ballarat
- Albury/Wodonga





Praise for the training

"We both got so much out of it. I particularly appreciated the awareness and hope for how treatable BPD is compared to the training I received in years gone by."

"Excellent, it's such a relief to have the tools and current knowledge to best support people with BPD. (90% of our client caseload)."

"Excellent. Passionate, caring trainers who obviously have a 'mission'. They give great impression of Spectrum. Thank you!"



Over 90% of participants were 'highly' or 'very highly' satisfied with the training overall, including the resources and learning activities provided; the trainers' knowledge in the content; the trainers' responsiveness to their needs and the administration arrangements of the workshop were also favourably evaluated.

All the participants indicated that they would recommend the workshop to their colleagues and their confidence and knowledge increased as a result of attending the workshop. It is also encouraging that participants had a more positive attitude towards people with BPD post the workshop. With the positive evaluation of the workshops, these clinicians are returning to their managers within their services, advocating for the workshop to be delivered to all their staff.

About the workshop

Research has highlighted the commonalities among specialist and generalist treatments, leading to the development of integrated, common factors-based, stepped-care treatments that can be adapted to Australian health systems.

The two-day BPD Core Competency Workshop using the 'common factors' approach, trains clinicians to detect, diagnose and provide therapeutic interventions during every clinical interaction, even in the absence of formal long-term psychotherapeutic interventions. The workshop allows for a greater number of clinicians to be trained in the core competencies and in turn have a greater impact on the delivery of therapeutic treatment to people with BPD symptoms. The BPD Core Competency workshops and associated resources were developed by a partnership between Australian BPD Foundation and Spectrum with funding from the National Mental Health Commission.



"There is a great need to add capacity to the general care system and this book does that."

– Associate Professor
Vinat Lakra



NEW GP book fills treatment gap

This year Spectrum was incredibly proud to release its new book *'Borderline Personality Disorder - A Practical Guide for General Practitioners'* which was specifically written for General Practitioners (GPs), filling a much needed gap in the treatment of BPD in Australia.

At its launch in April, the authors and editors came together with several prominent members of the Psychiatry and General Practitioner fraternities to celebrate this important milestone.

Why a book for GPs?

"There is a great need to add capacity to the general care system and this book does that," said Associate Professor Vinat Lakra, President Elect - Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists.

For most people experiencing BPD, their GP is the first health professional that they come into contact with. GPs can therefore have a major role in improving the outcomes for people with BPD by facilitating early detection of the diagnosis, offering appropriate evidence-based interventions, and onward referral to psychologists and psychiatrists.

We are aware that access to treatments for people with BPD is extremely limited and that GPs often struggle to help their patients receive the best possible care.

This book provides clinically useful information about BPD, demystifies chronic self-injury and suicidal behaviours, and help GPs understand the psychological treatment principles for BPD that can be utilised within the context of a busy general practice. It also provides some information to guide GPs regarding referral services available.

The accessibility of the book was welcomed by Dr Karen Price, President, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

"Thank you for this book I think it's going to be really enlightening, I highly recommend it. It's really readable and full of great resources", she said.

Building on crucial work with GPs

Eight years ago Spectrum recognised the important role GPs play in the overall care of people with personality disorders and opened its Personality Disorder Specialist Clinic to support general practitioners (GP) to identify and treat people with personality disorders. The service also offers specialist psychiatric assessments for clients referred by GPs and specific training programs for GPs.

Inspired by a collaboration with South Eastern Melbourne PHN (SEMPHN) from 2018 to 2019, Spectrum staff and GPs wrote this short book in collaboration, to guide GPs in the treatment of BPD within primary care settings.

It was written by:

- Associate Professor Josephine Beatson
- Adjunct Clinical Associate Professor Sathya Rao
- Dr Gillian Singleton
- Dr Barbara Burge
- Dr Angela Rutherford
- Ms Rita Brown

Edited by:

- Associate Professor Josephine Beatson
- Adjunct Clinical Associate Professor Sathya Rao

Key partnerships



Below is a list of some of the key organisations that Spectrum has been fortunate to work with in 2021.

- Australian BPD Foundation
- Tandem Carer Organisation – VIC
- Monash University
- Melbourne University
- Swinburne University
- Project Air PD Initiative NSW
- BPD Co, South Australia
- HYPE (Orygen)
- Coroners Court of Victoria
- Austin Health
- Partners in Recovery Care (PARC)
- St George's Hospital
- Victorian Data Linkage Service
- South East Melbourne Primary Health Network
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Deakin University
- Australian Catholic University
- SANE Australia
- RMIT University
- Centre for Mental Health Learning (CMHL)
- Mind
- Eastern Health Foundation
- ACT Health
- Forensic Mental Health Service, ACT
- Centre of Excellence for Eating Disorders (CEED)
- Alfred Health
- Monash Health
- Northern Health
- Barwon Health
- Goulburn Valley Health
- Forensicare
- Tasmania Statewide Mental Health Services
- Top End Mental Health Services at Northern Territory



Improving treatment by better understanding lived experience

We have been incredibly privileged this year to have Jacinta complete her peer work placement with Spectrum for the Certificate IV Mental Health Peer Work, over a period of four months. During her time with Spectrum, she worked across a range of projects including consultation on research measures, reviewing and delivering training, development of innovation documents, and the Emergency Department collaborative project.

Passionate about improvement

Jacinta attributes her recovery to Spectrum's services, which involved both therapy and collaboration with the Area Mental Health Service. Prior to joining Spectrum's Lived Experience Panel, Jacinta felt inspired by Spectrum's vision to increase the capacity of the workforce to work with people with BPD.

She wanted to use this opportunity to increase Spectrum's knowledge on how best to accommodate the lived experience workforce for people with a lived experience of BPD, and by extension, contribute to improving the overall outcomes for people living with BPD.

Her insights into the impact that language can have on people with BPD was very helpful as she highlighted that some words used regularly by clinicians can inadvertently come across as insensitive, abrasive and stigmatising.

Having Jacinta's input has given us a fresh perspective and helped us change the language we use, which in turn will change the impact the content has on the people with BPD we are trying to communicate with.

Changing the way in which we practice

Jacinta was also integrally involved in the Emergency Department Project, from participation in the steering committee, implementation, and evaluation components of this project.

Jacinta's placement has helped clinicians from various departments to build a better understanding of the internal experiences felt by people living with BPD.

One of the ED clinicians in the program said, "You've changed the way I practice in ED".

This was just one of the comments made as part of her work with the Emergency Department project, reflecting the remarkable inspiration and positive influence having people with lived experience integrated into services can provide.

"You've changed the way I practice in ED."

– ED clinician



A learning opportunity

There were a number of learning opportunities along the way that highlighted areas of growth that will support ongoing lived experience work at Spectrum in a truly valuable and sustainable way.

This positive experience has demonstrated the scope of possibilities for lived experience work within Spectrum and the wider community for people living with personality disorder, which extends beyond the current limitations of the Lived Experience Consultation Panel.





Spectrum 2021

110 Church Street
Richmond Vic 3121 Australia
p: (03) 8413 8750

General Enquiries:

e: Spectrum@easternhealth.org.au

Workforce Development Enquiries:

e: SpectrumTraining@easternhealth.org.au

www.spectrumbpd.com.au

easternhealth

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