

Premenstrual Syndrome

Woman loses family before discovering problem

By Marie McOso Staff Writer

Janice Barber figures she's got nothing more to learn in her campaign to alert women to the dangers of PMS — Premenstrual Syndrome.

Her marriage is shattered. She's lost custody of her children. She's been in and out of hospitals. Her mental health has been questioned and her self-esteem was at low ebb for so long she began to question her own stability.

All of it happened, she feels, because of ineffective medical treatment for the emotional and physical ailments she was experiencing with regularity over the past nine years.

She was diagnosed as a manic depressive; it turns out all she had was a severe case of Premenstrual Syndrome.

"If I can save one woman from going through what I went through, I'll be happy," she said.

BARBER, 25, has talked at one seminar to alert women to the dangers of PMS if allowed to go unselected.

She will speak at seminars on PMS arranged by Dr. Edward Lichten, a Southfield gynecologist specializing in PMS. These will be Wednesday, May 9,

"If I can save one woman from going through what I went through, I'll be happy."

— Janice Barber

at the Southfield Library and Thursday, May 10, at the West Bloomfield Library. There is no charge. For additional information, call 569-3020.

The meeting is open to the public and boyfriends and husbands are invited to attend. Barber thinks it is essential for husbands and boyfriends to understand what premenstrual syndrome is in order to lend support to the woman in stress.

According to Lichten, PMS encompasses a wide variety of emotional and physical ailments that recur at the same time each month. It is hormonal in origin. Symptoms do not necessarily accompany menstruation.

Many physicians still believe the monthly episodes to be psychological rite disturbances, when they usually are not, according to Lichten, who is also director of the Wayne State University Gynecologic Pain Clinic.

MOST DANGEROUS perhaps are the mood swings and the depression that often accompany PMS. That was particularly true in Barber's case. It eventually helped lead to the breakup of her marriage and her being hospitalized on several occasions.

At one low period in her life, she said she contemplated suicide.

Barber, of Westland, believes she has suffered with PMS since she was 13. But the problems became more serious after the birth of her first baby. She said she went into a deep postpartum depression that required taking tranquilizers.

Things went from bad to worse in the next several years, she said, punctuated with frequent angry outbursts.

conflicts and the demands of a busy family times for no real reason." Her marriage became very shaky.

"We were fighting a lot," she said. The birth of a second baby compounded the problems. She experienced depression again.

TREATMENT FOR FIVE years by a psychologist, who prescribed lithium to control her mood swings, helped. But they didn't really solve her problems, she said. She was diagnosed as a manic depressive.

"Someone should have seen the pattern, but no one made the connection." Instead, she was being treated as if she were mentally ill. Her husband's failure to understand reinforced that attitude, she said.

Help finally came when a psychologist she was seeing advised her to consult with the Women's Hospital in Ann Arbor.

Ironically, Barber recalls, she came across a medical flyer listing PMS symptoms.

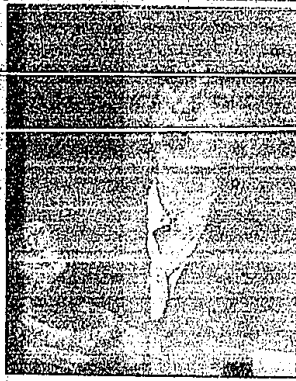
"I can remember telling a friend of mine, 'This sounds like me.'"

A simple test conducted by Dr. Jonathan Ayres at Women's Hospital at the peak time of her menstrual cycle revealed that Barber had a severe case of PMS.

THE DOCTOR THEN put her on progesterone and made some diet changes.

"He told me I wouldn't feel any relief for about a month," Barber said. "But I felt it almost immediately. It's been smooth sailing ever since." That was five months ago.

She said she still has some bad days, "but not like they were."



struggle with her problems — during which time she was diagnosed as manic depressive — Janice Barber learned that she was suffering from a severe case of Premenstrual Syndrome. Now her goal is to make other women aware of the disorder and what can happen if the condition is not diagnosed and treated.

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