

Traumatic Brain Injury

Source: From the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Used with permission. www.asha.org

Video Link: <http://www.brainline.org/content/multimedia.php?id=1439>

Narrator: A recent poll commissioned by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, or ASHA, and conducted by ASHA speech language pathologists indicates a dramatic increase in traumatic brain injuries among the civilian population nationwide. Worse than that, inadequate insurance coverage may be the biggest obstacle to optimal recovery.

Noma Anderson: Our polls show that 65% of our polled speech language pathology members see inadequate health insurance or benefits as the largest barrier to optimal recovery. More than 40% of our poll members are seeing a decrease in the amount of insurance coverage for traumatic brain injury related services.

Narrator: And for those that already struggle with the consequences of a traumatic brain injury, inadequate coverage adds insult to injury.

Yvonne Hoffman: How can an insurance company make a determination about what is happening inside my brain that is stopping my life from functioning the way it used to and they won't pay for the treatment I need.

Narrator: Traumatic brain injury, or TBI, is defined as a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating brain injury that disrupts the function of the brain. A TBI can result in short or long term impairments affecting thinking language, learning, emotions, behavior, and sensation. TBI is a major problem especially among certain groups of the civilian population.

Patricia Fletcher: A group that is more prone to a traumatic brain injury logically are the seniors, the more senior adults in our communities. People who may sustain a fall. Or it may be younger children, could be athletes that are playing football or contact sports are at a higher risk. People who are riding motorcycles who are not wearing helmets or just engaging in high risk athletic or physical activity.

Narrator: Although in great measure therapy helps those who suffer a traumatic brain injury. For many the consequences can mean life long changes and adjustments.

Jon Weiss: My life has changed a great deal, by in large coming here most days and getting this training. But I can no longer do the things in which I took for granted before. Things like sports like baseball or sailing. I can't quite go out and do them I need to kind of prepare a little bit. I can't drive a car. My family life has changed, they've had to adjust to me. People have had to ask the hard questions and I've had to come up with the answers to those hard questions which have become much easier for me. To many the victims of a traumatic brain injury look and act normal. So those who don't know about TBI diminish it's importance and dismiss it.

Yvonne Hoffman: If a person is in a wheelchair we can look and say something serious has happened to that person. If we see somebody who is on crutches and they have a broken bone we know something has happened. We have a visual connection to the injury, we don't know the details, but we know that that person has had something serious go wrong. You don't know what's happened to me people look at me and don't really know how to respond to me.

Narrator: The great unanswered question is, how to force health insurance companies to provide adequate coverage for cognitive rehabilitation and other extended care needs for survivors of TBI. To learn more about cognitive rehabilitation, traumatic brain injury, speech language pathology, and the american speech-language-hearing association. Visit www.asha.org.