

# About Traumatic Brain Injury...

## An Overview

- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is the leading cause of death and disability for people under 34 years
- In 2001 over 1,745 persons were hospitalized with brain injury in NM
- Young adults 15-24 years old have most of the injuries
- Children and older adults are the second most prone to sustain a brain injury
- Falls are the number one cause of brain injuries, automobile accidents are a close second.
- It is estimated by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that 2% of the population are living with TBI

## Some Basic Information For You

- When your loved one is first injured, you will experience shock and crisis. Hospital social work staff are trained to assist you during this time. If this service is not offered, ask for it.
- Start early to keep a written record of all that is happening. Include the names of all doctors and record what they tell you. Record your loved ones responses, so you can look back at progress, no matter how small.
- If you have concerns about insurance coverage or financial assistance, contact the hospital business office immediately, so they can refer you to appropriate help.
- Remember, every patient responds differently depending on type of injury, severity of injury, and surgical complications.
- Your loved one may be having different responses than the patient next to him/her.
- Recovery may follow a general pattern of Emergency Department, ICU, Step-Down, or hospital room and rehabilitation.
- Even after rehabilitation, your loved one may still experience effects from the brain injury.
- Physicians may use terms such as “Glasgow Coma Scale” or Rancho Scale (these are guides to the severity of injury). Your family member may not go through each scale completely or may respond more quickly.

## Additional Questions You May Have

### **When will my loved one wake up?**

No one can tell you that. You can only wait and see, furthermore, people who have had a brain injury rarely wake up all at once. Rather the process of full recovery of consciousness is gradual and takes hours in the mildest cases, and make take months or years in the most severe cases. Some people improve only to a point, and never fully regain awareness of their surroundings.

### **Can a person recover from a brain injury?**

Yes, but in contrast to the short time it takes to become injured, the recovery from brain injury is measured in weeks, months and even years. Recovery is usually most rapid shortly after the injury (during the first six months) and slows down with the passage of time. Though some people with severe brain injuries end up with virtually no noticeable problems, many subtle problems are usually present. Others require constant care for the rest of their lives.

### **How will I know what the ultimate outcome will be?**

This is the most important question of all, and the most difficult to answer. The only way to be sure is to wait and see what happens. It is important to encourage the person to be independent as possible and try to get better. As time passes, the professionals caring for your loved one, will begin to get an idea of what the possible outcomes may be and though these estimates are important, actual recovery may take longer and the pattern of recovery may be different than expected.

### **What kind of behaviors may result from a brain injury?**

Listed below are some terms and examples of the ways a brain injury might affect your loved one's behavior.

**Denial:** Does not admit or realize the existence or the severity of problems; shows unrealistic attitude and makes excuses for problems.

**Impulsivity:** Acts or speaks without first considering the consequences; attempts tasks beyond capabilities; starts tasks and asks questions before hearing directions; crosses street without looking.

**Lack of insight:** Is not able to understand and integrate the facts of the situation; shows unrealistic future planning and poor decision making.

**Verbosity:** Shows inability to control amount of talking; talks continuously in a disorganized rambling manner.

**Liability:** Exhibits inappropriate and/or exaggerated emotional expression of laughing or crying.

**Confabulation:** Fabricates ideas which are partly or completely based on false information; uses bits and pieces of real or past information to describe the current situation.

**Lack of initiation or follow through:** Shows inability to start actions independently and carry through to completion; most often requires structure and supervision.

**Poor judgment:** Is not able to correctly analyze a situation or take into account the probable consequences of one's actions.

**Poor reasoning:** Cannot draw a logical conclusion given analysis and support of the given facts.

**Social imperception:** Lacks emotional concern about the world around him/her; disregard usual customs, especially apparent in social situations.

**Recent Memory Disruption:** Has difficulty with memory for recent events or information although long term memory is relatively intact.

**Perseveration:** Problems with attention may result in the person "getting stuck". Repeating a thought, concern, or gesture and having difficulty moving to a new thought.

**Attention problems:** has difficulty with subtle or the very obvious maintaining attention, concentrating, shifting attention to a new subject or being able to attend to more than one thing at a time.