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Introduction

Within the past decade there has been an increased interest in the field of vocational rehabilitation for persons who survive traumatic brain injuries (TBI). Historically, individuals with TBI did not re-enter the workplace. However, new vocational technologies are being developed and more traditional services modified to meet the unique needs of this population. Today, more than ever, return to work following TBI is possible for those who want to work and have accessibility to appropriate services and supports.

Although return to work outcomes continue to be influenced by a complex interplay of factors, we have learned that individual motivation when combined with pertinent supports can lead to success. We also have come to realize that vocational interventions must be creative, flexible and individualized to satisfy the needs and preferences of those being served. Furthermore, outcomes are improved when individuals engage in employment that is both financially and socially rewarding to them. A new wave of programs which promote self advocacy through client or customer participation indicates the emergence of a positive trend and direction for future research.

In this issue, a number of leaders in the field were asked to submit practical articles related to innovative practices in vocational rehabilitation for persons with TBI. We hope you will be able to immediately acquire valuable information from the contents that can be used in your day to day activities.

In the first article, Walters offers first hand advice to professionals on how a practical and sensitive approach to vocational rehabilitation can go a long way. This is suitably followed with an article by West which offers an overview of ser-

vice trends that promote active customer involvement. The use of natural supports and a consumer driven approach to supported employment is described using a case study approach.

Past research has documented that while the use of compensatory strategies can influence the person's ability to do a job, promoting the consistent use of strategies can present a challenge. Briel addresses how client participation in the selection of strategies can maximize future use on the job. Discussion evolves around the identification of potential strategies through situational assessments, and implementation guidelines are offered.

Witol, et al. make recommendations for individualized, holistic rehabilitation programs which are dedicated to having proactive long term follow up services. The suggestions stem from an analysis of the obstacles to employment as reported by a sample of unemployed persons with TBI and their family members. Reported barriers to employment were transportation, physical and cognitive problems. The perception between survivors and family members were markedly similar.

Another approach reportedly known for its consumer direction is the Clubhouse model. Jacobs and DeMello offer guidance on how the model, which has a long history of supporting persons with psychiatric impairment, may be modified to serve persons with TBI.

Parente and Stapleton present a systematic model for assessment and cognitive remediation. Emphasis on functional on the job approaches to cognitive remediation, such as the use of supported employment, environmental engineering and implementation of prosthetic devices are presented.

There have been rapid developments of personal computer technology and telecommunications, particularly with the expansion of the content on the World Wide Web. In this article, Rowland and Wisor provide the reader with an introduction to online brain injury resources that may be of interest to survivors, families and professionals. It serves as a guide to a broad audience and is divided into sections for the novice and advanced user.

The Virginia Survivor Council was formed to 'ensure representation and first-hand input of survivors of head injury' on a National level. Brown offers a description of the council's mission, structure, accomplishments to date and future direction. Preliminary instruction to those interested in forming such an entity is available.

One of the recurring problems reported by supported employment participants has been an overall lack of involvement in the process. People with disabilities have reported feeling powerless within programs which offer no opportunity for choice and control. This creates a need to maximize consumer participation in Supported Employment. Wehman, et al. describe the Consumer Initiated Approach to Supported Employment which demonstrates how to promote full consumer inclusion. Outcome data from this federally funded demonstration project are documented.

Public policy initiatives, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act ADA (PL 101-336), demand that accommodations be available to persons with disabilities. At the same time, this presents new challenges to vocational support personnel. Hirsh and colleagues reveal how the ADA can have a positive impact on employment for persons with TBI when all stakeholders unite to find solutions. Cases from the Job Accommodation Network JAN database that were related to accommodation and TBI were reviewed in order to identify and com-

pare concerns among parties. The greatest issue for all groups was effective job performance. Accommodations related to functional limitations are related.

Goodall, et al. provide a brief overview of the Positive Behavioral Supports approach and include case studies of its use. The approach, initially used with individuals with developmental and other severe disabilities, reportedly appears to have potential as an effective approach to assisting persons with TBI who have difficult behaviors.

Experience and observations gathered during research conducted with a national sample of community based rehabilitation programs are discussed by Thomas and Menz. Specific suggestions regarding the importance of documenting functional assets and preinjury skills as well as present physical, neuropsychological and social adaptive skills are discussed. The importance of access to employment and post-employment resources is stressed.

In order to be effective, professionals may benefit from becoming familiar with the specific medical issues that are commonly observed as a result of TBI. Cifu, et al. provide a basic overview of information related to neuromedical considerations affecting return to work.

We believe this issue presents an array of articles that represent practices which are moving in the right direction, toward adopting approaches that are truly responsive to people with disabilities and the community in which we work. It is hoped that you will find the contents helpful as we move forward and continue to make improvements and advancements in the field.

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