

Introduction

Where the rubber hits the road: Successful vocational reintegration for survivors of traumatic brain injury

Arguably one of the greatest challenges to the rehabilitation of survivors of traumatic brain injury is vocational reintegration. What people do for a living is vitally important to them for so many reasons, and impairments arising from traumatic brain injury can lead to devastating disability in vital areas of cognition and behavior. These disabling conditions can in turn lead to reduced capacity in the workplace. But do they have to? Can anything be done to counter the negative effects and reduce the disabling aspects of acquired brain injury? The answer is yes. The professional literature tells us that in fact, there are programs that work. Does that mean we have beaten traumatic brain injury? Obviously not. But there are programs that make a difference. We know that as well.

Seven papers are presented here arising from the First International Conference on Vocational Outcomes in Traumatic Brain Injury held in Vancouver, Canada, April 14–16, 2005. The conference, believed to be the first of its kind in the world, brought together speakers and attendees from Europe, South America, Alaska, Hawaii, and all points in between. Interdisciplinary in nature and reflecting the field of vocational rehabilitation, the conference drew psychologists, physicians, occupational therapists, nurses, vocational rehabilitation specialists and others concerned with the vocational reintegration of our subject population. State of the art research was presented that allowed people to go back to their employment settings and immediately implement strategies supported by evidence based research, quality program evaluation and disease state management. In addition, attendees were given tools to identify those at risk for failure in vocational rehabilitation, be informed of the relative merits of assessment

and interventions and become aware of some of the financial issues of acquiring a traumatic brain injury.

We have selected the following papers based on the broad range of subject matter, again reflecting the wide diversity of issues in vocational rehabilitation, as well as nationality. You will see the article of Mr. Hwan Kim and his colleagues which tells us about work related traumatic brain injury in Ontario, Canada. You will also read another Canadian article, this one coming from the Province of Quebec, in which Dr. Guerin and her colleagues discuss early identification of individuals at risk of poor functional outcome. Dr. Catherine Mateer and her colleague Ms. Claire Sira, also writing from Canada, presented a highly successful pre-conference workshop on strategies that work and which spawned the paper presented herein which is appropriately named “Intervention Strategies for Vocational Rehabilitation”. The paper of Dr. B. Johnstone et al. presents interesting findings for his subject group, for example, that there are different services and outcomes for men and women who suffer traumatic brain injury, with, amongst others, a recommendation for less emphasis on assessments and more on interventions. The paper of Ms. Ana Pereira and her team supports Dr. Johnstone’s findings with regards to services making the difference and also makes the point that financial disincentives can be a detriment to successful vocational rehabilitation. Dr. Deutsch and his colleagues inform on vocational outcomes after brain injury in a patient population evaluated for life care plan reliability and finally, a research team from Vocational Economics Inc. presents interesting data on financial loss for those with cognitive impairments.

We hope you find this edition of *NeuroRehabilitation* both interesting and useful. Because of the posi-

tive feedback received at last years conference, we will be holding the 2nd International Conference on Vocational Outcomes in Traumatic Brain Injury in Vancouver, May 24–26, 2007. Our subtitle will be “Interventions that work”. We therefore invite you and your colleagues world-wide to submit abstracts and attend what

we hope will become the central forum for exchange of information on this very vital topic.

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