



Brain Injury Association of Texas

Enewsletter

Call For Papers

BIATX is issuing a Call For Papers for its 2009 Statewide Conference to be held in Austin, Texas, April 4-7, 2009 at the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center. We will be focusing on the following themes: Professional (CEU presentations), Family/Survivor Track, Panel Discussion and Veterans' Issues. Please visit our website for more information <http://www.biatx.org/>

BIATX's next board meeting will be January 17th from 10am to 4pm at the association's main office in Austin.

For information, contact us at:

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Sexuality After Traumatic Brain Injury

By: Angelle M. Sander, PhD
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Traumatic brain injury (TBI) affects every aspect of a person's life, from their physical functioning to their relationships. Many people don't realize that TBI can also have a negative effect on sexual functioning. Researchers have shown that many men and women experience problems with sex after TBI. Unfortunately, doctors and other health care professionals do not always discuss potential sexual problems with survivors with TBI and their partners. The purpose of this article is to provide some information on the types of changes in sexual functioning that can happen after TBI and to explain some possible causes. Some information on what you can do to help with problems will also be offered.

TBI can have an effect on a few different aspects of the sexual experience. One effect is on a person's desire for sexual activity. After TBI, many people report that they are less interested in sex. They simply do not feel the desire. They may not think about or daydream about sexual activity as they may have before. They may not even feel desire for a person that they were very attracted to before the injury. These people may never initiate sexual activity, and their partners may feel that they are never interested in sex. In other cases, a person may feel increased sexual desire after injury. This can range from just a little more to much more. In rare cases, a person may not be able to control this desire and may make inappropriate sexual advances toward people or may request sex so often that a partner becomes uncomfortable. If this occurs, it is very important to talk with your physician about it. Another aspect of sexuality that can be affected by TBI is arousal or the ability to become sexually excited. Even when they have the desire for sexual activity, persons with TBI may have difficulty becoming aroused or excited. This means that while their minds may want to have sex, their body may not respond correctly and may make it difficult to have sex. Men may have difficulty getting or keeping an erection. *Continued.....*



BRAIN INJURY FAMILY GUIDE & DVD

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Women may not have enough moisture in the vagina, and this can make sexual activity difficult or painful. A third area of sexual functioning that can be affected is the ability to achieve climax or orgasm. Some people may be able to become sexually excited and to participate in sexual activity, but have difficulty reaching orgasm/climax. These people can feel frustrated with the sexual experience- like their desire was not satisfied. If this problem continues, they may be less willing to have sex.

There are many reasons that a person can have sexual problems after TBI. The two parts of the brain that are most affected by TBI are the frontal lobes and the temporal lobes. Both of these are also important for sexual functioning. Therefore, when they are damaged, sexual functioning can be affected. The different parts of the brain communicate with each other by the release of chemicals. These chemicals are also involved in sexual functioning, and they are disrupted by TBI. TBI can also disrupt hormones. Hormones are important for sexual and reproductive functioning, such as controlling the menstrual cycle (monthly periods) in women, and for making sperm in men. After TBI, changes in the brain affect the production of hormones, which in turn affects the working of the sexual organs. These changes can affect monthly periods and the ability to become pregnant for women. They can also affect sperm production in men, making it harder for them to get someone pregnant. Medications used after TBI can also affect sexual functioning. Many of the medications used to treat problems after TBI can have negative side effects on sexual functioning. Some of

these medicines are those used to treat seizures, depression, sleep problems, and attention and memory problems.

Some of the sexual problems that occur after TBI may be related to problems with movement. Some people have spasticity, or a stiffness in the muscles that stops them from relaxing. This can make it difficult to engage in sexual activity. Problems with balance and with slowed movement can also affect sexual functioning. Changes in thinking abilities, such as attention, memory, reasoning, and planning, can also affect sexuality. For example, someone who has problems with attention may not be able to focus during sexual activity. This may lead to the partner feeling that the person with injury is not interested in sex or is bored. Persons with planning difficulties may not be able to plan the steps necessary to arrange a romantic encounter or even to make a social date. Other people have difficulty initiating any activities, including sex. Some people with TBI go through emotional changes, such as depression. Loss of interest in sex can be a symptom of depression. Many persons with TBI lose self-esteem and feel less attractive, which affects their sexuality.

If you or your partner has experienced negative changes in sexual functioning after TBI, the most important thing to do is to talk to a physician or other health care professional about it. If possible, talk to someone who has experience in dealing with TBI. It is possible that your problem can be easily addressed by a change in medication. If not, you should have a comprehensive medical examination, including blood work for hormone levels. If there is no medically detectable reason for the sexual problem, then you should consider counseling. If you are dissatisfied with your sexual activity because you have difficulty finding a partner, you should consider joining groups, such as singles groups, church groups, Y.M.C.As, or volunteer organizations. This can increase your social network and lead to more opportunities to develop intimate relationships.

Sexuality is an important part of being human and gives quality to a person's life. Accepting this, and not feeling embarrassed to seek help for problems, is the first step toward healthy sexual functioning. It is a good idea to write down any questions about sexuality prior to your doctor's appointment. This will help you to remember and also will help if you have trouble finding the words. If you feel embarrassed speaking about sex, you could always show the doctor a written question. The most important thing is that you get the help you need to improve your sexual functioning.

Walk For Thought Wrap-up



The Association and Nu Gamma Alumni Association would like to thank each and every one of you for your support of and participation in our 2008 Walk For Thought. We raised upwards of \$13,000.00! We couldn't have done it without you!! We had a great turnout and a good time was had by all. ResCare Premier brought an amazing 52 walkers and teams "Sammy's Brainiacs" and "Corey's Challengers" were our top fundraisers. Way to go you guys! We would also like to say a special "thank you" to our sponsors-without them the Walk

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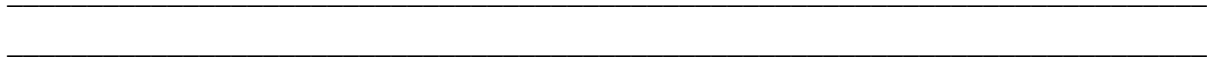
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What We Accomplished

The Brain Injury Association of Texas looks back at achievements in 2008

Eric Makowski, President



I have had the privilege of serving alongside a dedicated Board at the BIATX for several years now. At the end of each year, it helps to renew our spirit and sort through the bustle of the season when we take a moment to reflect on has been accomplished together for all Texans with brain injury and their families. The magnitude and far reach of our efforts hit me like a bolt out of the blue when I received a notice from my health plan carrier last week entitled “Notice of Certain Mandatory Benefits – Benefits for Treatment of Acquired Brain Injury”. The policy notice covered a long list of essential brain injury services that are mandated to be covered by most health insurance carriers. This Legislative mandate would not have been possible if it were not for the hard work of advocates at this Association and our partners at the Texas Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Council (TTBIAC). What a thrill to know people all across the state were receiving the same notice and more importantly that families who might not have even heard about brain injury yet, would have adequate coverage and treatment for their loved ones if an injury occurs.

Legislatively, the Association continued to work on public policy that improves access to care at less cost than in the past. We are diligently working with representatives of the [Health and Human Services Commission to create a long term TBI waiver](#). We are also coordinating efforts with representatives from the VA and military to improve awareness of federal, state and local resources for military service members with injuries. The BIATX publish a [Guide for Veteran's](#) earlier this year and has been adding resources links to the web site including the comprehensive [TexVet.com site](#).

In 2009 we also educated a high number of professionals from the field of brain injury rehabilitation through hosting two successful one day seminars in Houston and Lubbock with distinguished speakers from across the state. The Association was also pleased to help coordinate training with the comprehensive rehabilitation services counselors from the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services. We will host our [biennial statewide conference](#) in Austin this coming April with independent focus areas for professionals, military veterans and survivors and their families. Special preference will be given to speakers who can co-facilitate their talk with a brain injury survivor or family member. The Association hopes in this way to provide a unique experience for attendees that simply cannot be obtained when studying for CEU's through on-line websites.

The Association also worked to provide additional content through our website in the form of resource links, networking, new publications and streaming video. Support groups have more information for starting a non-profit and facilitating a group. We have started an on-line discussion group for survivors with mild cognitive impairments to discuss common obstacles and community resources. We have partnered with our friends at the TTBIAC to provide

[streaming educational video regarding brain injury entitled "Making a Difference: Meeting the Special Needs of Individuals with Brain Injury"](#).

We have helped to provide a face and voice to brain injury through media outreach and awareness. This was evident at the Walk for Thought, Peace of Mind 5k, fundraiser for Peanut and numerous news articles where Association Board members were quoted. It is critically important that we continue this outreach through the media because better injury prevention policies need to be crafted. Military personnel need to have a strong commitment from the general public to ensure appropriate services when returning home from the wars in the Middle East.

Most importantly, our all volunteer Board has answered the phone when Texans from across the state call for help and resources. This Information and Referral service is singularly the most important function of the Association because the BIATX is still the only organization with the ability to provide this invaluable service to Texans in crisis due to injury. We are committed to keep answering the phone through 2009 and thank everyone for their continued hard work and support.

You can help us by staying involved with us year-round. Your actions impact families and communities across Texas. Support us financially if you can. Stay active by signing up for our e-newsletter and public policy alerts. Attend one of our events or support one of our many advertisers and sponsors. The Association has accomplished great things, let's reflect on that this holiday season and refresh ourselves for more hard work in the coming year.

From the Brain Injury Association of America:

**Press Statement
Connors**

Contact: Susan H.

Dec. 1, 2008

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**BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA SUPPORTS
WIDESPREAD USE OF NEW PREVALENCE ESTIMATES FOR
TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY**

*Advocacy Organization Applauds CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
for Statistical Rigor in Conservatively Estimating TBI-related Disability*

(WASHINGTON D.C.) – The number of civilians in the United States living with a long-term disability from traumatic brain injury (TBI) is now estimated to be 3.17 million, according to a new article published in the *Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation* (Vol. 23, No. 6, pp. 394-400). The new prevalence estimate reflects the use of updated methodology and is not indicative of a reduction in the annual incidence of TBI, which remains at 1.4 million civilians in the U.S. The estimate is based on the results of statistical modeling and

analysis of TBI hospitalization data from three states (Maryland, Vermont and New Jersey) in 2005 and does not include persons with TBI who were treated and released from the emergency department or other healthcare setting and those who did not seek treatment.

The Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA) applauds the CDC for funding this important research and urges swift and widespread use of the new prevalence estimate in the field of brain injury. The Brain Injury Association of America reminds advocates, clinicians, researchers, policymakers and the public that the 3.17 million people living in the U.S. with a long-term disability are unique individuals whose lives are forever changed by their injuries and who need and deserve ongoing specialized rehabilitation, lifelong neurological disease management and individualized services and supports in order to maximize their health, independence and happiness.