Facts about Traumatic Brain Injury

What is a traumatic brain injury?

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is defined as a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain. Not all blows or jolts to the head result in a TBI. The severity of such an injury may range from "mild," i.e., a brief change in mental status or consciousness to "severe," i.e., an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury. A TBI can result in short or long-term problems with independent function.

How many people have TBI?

Of the 1.4 million who sustain a TBI each year in the United States:

- 50,000 die;
- 235,000 are hospitalized; and
- 1.1 million are treated and released from an emergency department.[1]

The number of people with TBI who are not seen in an emergency department or who receive no care is unknown.

What causes TBI?

The leading causes of TBI are:

- Falls (28%);
- Motor vehicle-traffic crashes (20%);
- Struck by/against events (19%); and
- Assaults (11%).[1]

Blasts are a leading cause of TBI for active duty military personnel in war zones.[2]

Who is at highest risk for TBI?

- Males are about 1.5 times as likely as females to sustain a TBI.[1]
- The two age groups at highest risk for TBI are 0 to 4 year olds and 15 to 19 year olds.[1]
- Certain military duties (e.g., paratrooper) increase the risk of sustaining a TBI.[3]
- African Americans have the highest death rate from TBI.[1]

What are the costs of TBI?

Direct medical costs and indirect costs such as lost productivity of TBI totaled an estimated $60 billion in the United States in 2000.[4]

What are the long-term consequences of TBI?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that at least 5.3 million Americans currently have a long-term or lifelong need for help to perform activities of daily living as a result of a TBI.[5]

According to one study, about 40% of those hospitalized with a TBI had at least one unmet need for services one year after their injury. The most frequent unmet needs were:

- Improving memory and problem solving;
- Managing stress and emotional upsets;
- Controlling one's temper; and
- Improving one's job skills.[6]

TBI can cause a wide range of functional changes affecting thinking, language, learning, emotions, behavior, and/or sensation. It can also cause epilepsy and increase the risk for conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and other brain disorders that become more prevalent with age.[7,8]

Collaborating Organizations

Brain Injury Association of America
www.biausa.org
800-444-6443

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov
800-311-3435

Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center
www.dvbic.org
800-870-9244

Health Resources and Services Administration
www.hrsa.gov
301-443-3376

National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
www.nashia.org
301-656-3500

National Brain Injury Research Treatment and Training Foundation
www.nbirtt.org
434-220-4824

National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research, NICHD, NIH
www.nichd.nih.gov/about/ncmrr
800-370-2943

National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research
www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/nidrr
202-245-7640

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, NIH
www.ninds.nih.gov
800-352-9424

North American Brain Injury Society
www.nabis.org
703-960-6500

Social Security Administration
www.ssa.gov
800-772-1213

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