

Beechwords

Deborah Cerra-Tyl, Editor

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WHEN INDIVIDUALS WITH BRAIN INJURY GROW OLDER: HEALTH PROBLEMS AND PERCEPTIONS

Thomas Felicetti, PhD, Chair, Long Term Issues Task Force (LTITF), BI-ISIG, ACRM; Tina M. Trudel, PhD, Aging Study Coordinator, LTITF, BI-ISIG, ACRM

As we experience the graying of America, we also evidence the graying of brain injury. Over five million Americans now live with the long-term consequences of acquired brain disorders. This is a phenomenal reversal of the situation 30 years ago, when limited trauma expertise condemned many severe accident victims to death at the scene or in the emergency room. In the past several decades, the helicopters and ambulances that rush victims to state-of-the-art trauma centers not only carry life, but also give society a progeny of growing numbers of individuals with permanent disability.

Although the majority of initial brain injuries continue to strike those under age 30, two-thirds of these individuals will live at least another 30-40 years. Eighty thousand individuals per year experience the onset of long-term disability due to head trauma (BIA, 2000; NIH, 2000). These numbers are compelling, both from an ethical and long-term public health policy standpoint.

Brain injury and aging data are especially alarming to those who have worked in this field for many years, as some individuals with brain injury appear to experience the deleterious effects of aging earlier and faster than the general population. These affected persons with brain injury may be prematurely aging in the sense that they have not maintained their health and are experiencing disproportionate medical complications in many areas (Hibbard et.al., 1998).

Concerns related to aging with brain injury were both articulated to the Long Term Issues Task Force (LTITF) by Marilyn Spivack and addressed in a review article by Trudel (LTITF member) and Purdum in 1998. Since that time, the LTITF has undertaken a major research project surveying

the health problems, behaviors and perceptions of the population aging with brain injury. This project, involving a US-Canada pilot study and the current dissemination of thousands of questionnaires, has been underwritten with the financial support of Beechwood Rehabilitation Services, Lakeview Neuro-Rehabilitation Centers, ReMed and the Timber Ridge Group. Pilot study facilitators included Thomas Felicetti, PhD, Evalyn Lambert, MA, CCC-SLP, Carolyn Lemsky, PhD, ABPP, Michael Mozonni, PhD, BCBA, David Strauss, PhD and Coordinator, Tina M. Trudel, PhD. The piloting process allowed for solicitation of input from participants, state BIA meetings, ACRM members, and other individuals with brain injury, families and professionals.

The target population of the current Aging with Brain Injury study includes males and females who sustained traumatic brain injury after the age of 16, who are currently at least 10 years post-injury. Participations must be over thirty and volunteer to complete the survey with or without assistance. Approximately 1,000 surveys have been disseminated thus far, with well over 100 completed returns. While it is too early in the research process to make conclusive statements, early findings suggest high rates of seizures, medication use, obesity, smoking and hypertension, with health benefits from positive health and lifestyle choices.

This survey is on going. The LTITF is asking individuals who meet the research participant criteria (TBI after age 16, currently 10+ years post-injury and over 30) to complete a questionnaire which can be requested through Tina M. Trudel, PhD via telephone (603) 539-7451 or e-mail (ttrudel@lakeviewssystem.com). The survey may be completed independently or with assistance, and consists of demographic information, a short-form health survey (SF-36), and additional health questions. It is not a burdensome task, and the information obtained from a large, diverse group of respondents will contribute to raising awareness of a significant public health problem, developing public health policy, highlighting health maintenance and prevention, and providing a foundation for clinicians and researchers in the future. An interim study report will be published in Rehabilitation Outlook, and the final study report will be submitted to the Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.

Continued on page 2

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Continued from page 1

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Tina M. Trudel, PhD, is the Vice President of Clinical Services for the Lakeview Healthcare System; Clinical Director of

Lakeview NeuroRehabilitation Center in Effingham Falls, NH; and a Post-Doctoral Supervisor in Neuropsychology for the Department of Psychiatry, Dartmouth Medical School.

BEECHWOOD REHABILITATION SERVICE EXPANDS VOCATIONAL PROGRAM

by Lauren Cassel Brownell

An expanded vocational program at Beechwood Pennsylvania has provided a new “niche” for clients wishing to explore their capabilities.

Dawn Scheidell, Director of Vocational Services for Beechwood explains that the purpose behind all of Beechwood’s vocational programs is to assist their clients that have suffered traumatic brain injuries in “getting to their highest possible vocational level”.

“Our clients are trying to acquire as many skills as possible to help them re-enter society. We provide real life vocational endeavors – teaching real skills that will be beneficial to them in the real world”, Dawn said.

Some of these “real life vocational endeavors” include entry-level positions in housekeeping, data entry and food service.

Beechwood partners with a plant in Treviso to provide jobs for its clients where they are integrated with non-handicapped workers.

Clients fill volunteer positions at area businesses such as Langhorne Gardens and St. Mary’s Hospital.

The newest addition to the vocational opportunities available at Beechwood is The Beech Tree.

With training and the assistance of vocational instructors, residents are creating, distributing and marketing their own line of soaps, lotions, and shower gels. They also make candles, greeting cards, and home fragrance sprays in a wide variety of scents.

“The Beech Tree gives people with traumatic brain injuries a chance to enhance their vocational abilities”, explained Woods Services President, Dr. Robert Griffith. “We strive to provide all our residents with appropriate vocational experiences so that they can become independent, productive members of the community”.

Susan Wolfson, a Beechwood resident and employee of The Beech Tree program says, “This teaches you responsibility. You deal with money and communicate with people. It’s a step back into society”.

Dawn explains that residents are involved in every aspect of the business. Susan, for example, works on inventory and other paperwork associated with Beech Tree. She is very proud of the quality of the products and loves to share her enthusiasm about them with visitors.

Other residents design the product labels, send e-mails promoting the products, are involved in the advertising and help create the custom made baskets that are available.

They have recently developed a mobile cart: Beech Tree To You, that can tour the facility and make the products more readily available.

Currently, the majority of the products are sold in-house to employees and residents of Beechwood. They are also on sale to the public at Beechwood Manor, 469 East Maple Avenue, Langhorne. Hours are Tuesday from 1:00 – 2:30p.m. and Wednesday and Friday from 10:00-11:30a.m.

The Yellow Daffodil, the full-service flower shop located on the Woods Services site, also carries a full line of Beech Tree products.

Susan best summed up the benefits of purchasing the products when she said, “Our products make people feel good”.

Article courtesy Langhorne Ledger, November 9, 2001.



Sarah O'Hara, rehabilitation case manager, (pictured left) makes a purchase from Susan Wolfson, Beechtree sales associate at the Beechwood Manor shop.

RESEARCH PILOT STUDY

Beginning September 19, 2002, the PT Department at Beechwood, PA is planning to do a randomized controlled study of the effectiveness of treadmill training with Partial Body Weight Support compared to conventional gait training for patients with chronic TBI. A pilot study is proposed that would take place during a three month time period.

Conventional gait training for many of our clients consists of moderate to maximum assist to walk with asymmetric gait patterns. They require two or more therapists to help them walk in as close to a normal pattern as the treating therapists can support. A symmetric walking pattern is difficult to achieve.

With a partial body weight support system, for this study the Lite Gait system, and treatment clients up to 250 lbs are lifted out of the wheelchair to an upright walking posture by the device. They are then supported in good posture while partially weight-bearing as the therapist manually or through verbal cues assists with limb placement to achieve a symmetrical gait pattern. The question is whether there is greater improvement in overground walking after using

the Lite Gait than there is with conventional PT with the traumatic brain injury population.

There is a theory called the Central Pattern Generator Theory that states that ambulation speeds of 2.5 mph and greater trigger a walking reflex post neurological damage similar to the stepping reflex that is normal in infancy. Our study will be based on this theory.

Our hypothesis is that subjects trained to walk with a PBW support system (the Lite Gait System) with a treadmill speed of 2.5 mph will show greater improvement in gait than those trained to walk with traditional overground gait training at the end of a three month training period.

The Beechwood PT Department is in collaboration with Julie Mount, PhD, PT, an experienced researcher in the fields of neurology and motion analysis, who is on faculty at Thomas Jefferson University. Dr. Mount also has equipment that she is willing to lend us to evaluate outcomes.

It is our hope that this study will prove useful to the fields of physical therapy and brain injury in the effort to optimize client treatment. Wish us luck.

BEECHWOOD NEW JERSEY – “BEECH TREE EXPANSION”

It has been said that good things come to those who wait. This may be especially true for The Beech Tree. The client run business, a project of Beechwood Center of NJ, has been handcrafting bath and body projects since 1997. While sales to families, staff and visitors have been rewarding, sales to the general public have been limited to craft shows, bazaars, etc.

Through careful marketing strategies, The Beech Tree has been able to secure three locations in the South Jersey area to see their high quality, low priced products. Angels Attic, an antique and gift shop located just a block from the Chestnut Street Day location, had allotted a four-foot section for a new Beech Tree line called “Angels Touch”. Just minutes away, the **Haddonfield School of Dance**, will feature “Prima”, a line marketed toward young dancers. And **MCH at Cherry Hill**, local hair salon, will be the first in the area to include private label products (Beech Tree products with the owners own logo).

“Although each of these business people was interested in our clients, their primary concern was that the products be of good quality before they would allow us to sell there” said Dean Walton, the BCNJ staff member responsible for The Beech Tree project. “After sampling our lotions and seeing our labeling, each agreed that The Beech Tree would be a fine addition to their business”.

The placement of these items in the community has other advantages as well. Clients will visit each location weekly to take inventory, place orders and consult with business owners regarding consumer reaction.

For more information on The Beech Tree, please contact Dean Walton at 856-317-9300.

BEECHWOOD REHABILITATION SERVICES OF PENNSYLVANIA CONTINUES TO EARN HIGH STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION MARKS

Beechwood Rehabilitation Services of Pennsylvania (BRSPA) has solicited quantitative stakeholder feedback since the inception of our Information Outcomes Management (IOM) system. Twice each year, we solicit information using Stakeholder Satisfaction surveys. These surveys ask one to rate satisfaction on a scale that ranges from 1 through 9. A rating of 1 indicates great dissatisfaction. A rating of 9 indicates gratification greatly exceeding the person’s expectation.

Over the past five years, individuals receiving services at BRSPA have given us ratings of contentment exceeding 6.5. Family members and fiduciaries have given BRSPA satisfaction ratings exceeding 7.3. We are very proud to receive such wonderful feedback from Stakeholders and continue our commitment to provide our community with services that meet and exceed their expectations.

Beechwood

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BEECHWOOD NEW JERSEY REPORTS RESULTS OF STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION

Beechwood New Jersey reports results of Stakeholder Satisfaction indicate that overall the families of the persons indicate their continued satisfaction with the provision of services and feel the needs of their loved ones are being met.

In an unsolicited letter received in response to our Satisfaction Survey, Marsha Galdi, wife of a current consumer of outpatient services, wrote the following letter.

What a difference Beechwood's staff, therapists and program have made for my husband, James. I was originally told that very few people survive the severe brain injury he suffered on July 21, 2000 and if they do, are rarely able to function. I attribute much of his progress to the staff at Beechwood. I started taking him to Beechwood last August for one day a week. When I saw how much he liked going there and his increased alertness and verbalization after being there, he is now attending every day from early morning to mid-afternoon. Jim responds very positively to the Day Program Manager and the atmosphere that this individual maintains in the facility, one of good-natured camaraderie among the

clients and the clients and staff. There is also a firm understanding that everyone will be engaged in meaningful activities and not just "busy work", whether the activities are part of the therapy or day programs. Having clients of all ages also helps to create a more appealing atmosphere. The therapists at Beechwood all appear to be very professional and talented in their specific area. Thanks to them, Jim now demonstrates complete comprehension, even subtle humor and his speech has greatly improved, although he still has a long way to go. He has gone from walking laboriously with a walker to walking by himself, just using a cane for occasional balance. His craft activities are chosen to appeal to his "before injury" interests and talents, and he leaves Beechwood every day feeling like he is once again a constructive, useful human being.

Jim's doctors are all just amazed at the progress he's made, the things he's able to do and best of all, the wonderful potential he still has for more improvement. I'm convinced that this would never have happened without the staff at Beechwood. How do you thank people for giving a person a meaning to life again? How do I thank them for giving me my beloved husband back? The only thing I can think to do is to spread the word about the life-altering things going on at Beechwood, every chance I get.

Marsha Galdi, June 2002

SAVE THE DATE

2003 NJ Brain Injury Association Annual Seminar is scheduled for Thursday, May 15 and Friday, May 16 at the Sheraton, Eatontown, New Jersey. For more information, contact NJBIA at 732-738-1002

2003 PA Brain Injury Association Annual Seminar is scheduled for Sunday, June 22 and Monday, June 23 at the Harrisburg Marriott, Harrisburg, PA. For more information, contact Deborah Cerra-Tyl at 1-800-782-3299 or dcerra-tyl@woods.org.