



Postsecondary Transition for Young Adults with Traumatic Brain Injuries

Name: Michaela M. Kramer, M.S.

Advisor: Susan C. Davies, Ed.D.

Abstract

Students who have sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI) may experience a number of consequences that can adversely affect a successful transition. This study examined the difficulties young adults with TBI experience during and after the transition to a postsecondary setting. Results indicate that the young adults with TBI experience difficulties with: 1) Focus/attention, 2) fatigue/sleep, and 3) short-term memory. Implications for school psychologists are discussed.

Introduction

- An estimated 1 out of 550 school-age children in the U.S. will experience a TBI resulting in long-term disability (Arroyos-Jurado, Paulson, Ehly, & Max, 2006).
- Students with TBI are at risk for academic failure due to social, emotional, and behavioral consequences (Hartley, 2010).
- There are significant differences in the postsecondary instructional environment, such as the amount of structure and expectation for students to function independently (McGuire, 2010).

Methods

Research Design: Qualitative **Data Collection:** Individual interviews

Sample: $n = 5$, young adults ages 18-22 in Ohio attending a postsecondary institution and experiencing problems as a result of a TBI. Parents were also interviewed, separately.

Methodology: All sessions were transcribed and coded using NVivo, a computer software program designed to collect, organize, and analyze data from interviews. Themes were identified following analysis.

Results

OVERALL FINDINGS: Young adults with TBI experience a variety of difficulties with the transition to a postsecondary institution. College students with TBI have found specific accommodations useful, such as flash cards, notecards, journaling, planners/calendars, breaks, and extended time. Parents described their child's TBI experiences in greater detail and recognized more changes in their child's functioning than young adult participants.

EMERGING THEMES: Focus/attention difficulties; Recognition of injury's impact and need for reduced course load; Repeated injuries; Fatigue/sleep; Short-term memory difficulties; Headaches; Social issues

"For me, the biggest adjustment to college was my ability to focus because when you get to college, there are so many forms of distraction."

"I was taking 7 credit hours just to start off with, which isn't that much, and I was having to work a lot harder."

"I got another one [TBI] during a game, and this one was kind of the 'straw that ripped the camel's back' in terms of accumulation."

"During the school year, he's exhausted. And if you see him on the weekend, he's exhausted. So it does really take a lot out of him."

Implications

- School psychologists may recommend that students with TBI consider a reduced course load at a postsecondary institution.
- School psychologists should involve parents in transition planning and services.
- School psychologists in a high school setting may consider counseling students with TBI on seeking services.
- School psychologists should educate coaches and administrators on TBIs, especially on preventing repeated injuries.

References

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