

Traumatic Brain Injury

Traumatic Brain Injury, or TBI, occurs more than often from trauma to the head. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) define a TBI as a “disruption in the normal function of the brain, that is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or penetrating head injury”. This is when TBI takes on a completely different aspect of injury than other injuries to other anatomical entities of the body. Since our brain is basically the control center of our bodies, our brains give us our personalities, mental capacities, our abilities to reason and make decisions, along with functioning our central nervous system and autonomic nervous systems that encompass a great proportion of our systemic body functions that are taken for granted on a day-to-day basis.

For example, lacerations, punctures, broken bones for the most part heal and regain their anatomic function. However, with traumatic brain injuries, depending on the degree and severity of such, do not heal in the same fashion. Recovery is a functional recovery. It may be stated with some certainty, that no two brain injuries are alike. Signs and symptoms of TBI's may be immediately apparent or may not manifest for days or week after the trauma. In some cases, the individual often does not even realize that a trauma to the brain has occurred.

Initial signs and symptomology of traumatic brain injury can range anywhere from headache, confusion, memory loss, dizziness, blurred vision, slurred speech accompanied by nausea and vomiting and ringing in the ears etc. Delayed symptoms include irritability, depression, sleep disturbances, loss of smell or taste.

Diagnosis and evaluation should be made immediately after the traumatic event or ASAP:

- In-depth questioning on how the trauma occurred.
- Neurological assessment to determine the individual's level of consciousness along with symptomology that is presented.
- Further neurological examination that encompasses assessment of memory, vision, taste, smell, touch, balance, and reflexes to make a determination of brain function.
- Lastly, brain imaging in the form of Computed Tomography (CT) and/or Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) to rule out and or confirm intracranial bleeds or swelling.

Treatment can vary from medication for sedation, pain relief, diuretics or anti-seizure medication. Surgery may be necessary to remove hematomas to reduce pressure inside the skull, repairing a skull fracture, or creating an opening in the skull to relieve pressure. Long term therapy in the form of physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy may be rendered to reestablish how to walk, talk, and perform activities of daily living (ADL's) pending on the severity of trauma.

Our active military personnel are first and foremost prone to the occurrence of traumatic brain injury while serving in combat situations. There is a modality that can be integrated with the aforementioned treatment quite successfully for some of the patient's afflicted with TBI. Scalp acupuncture (Neuroacupuncture) is a specialized treatment protocol where therapeutic needling is performed on specific lines and zones on the scalp to treat various head trauma and cerebral diseases. The needles are inserted into the loose areolar tissue layer on the scalp to thereby stimulate the brain neurons of the underlying areas, which in turn stimulate those brain cells that are related to the impaired functions, i.e., balance, speech, motor functions etc. Sometimes needles are also inserted on traditional acupuncture points of the body.

Speed and recovery vary from individual to individual depending on the severity of brain trauma and how long going are the effects of the trauma. This is something all TBI patients should look into as part of the integrative treatment protocols and especially our wounded veterans when suffering from TBI inflicted while serving our country. Treatment is free of charge for our veterans at our Veteran's Clinic at National University of Health Sciences, located at 200 Roosevelt Road, Lombard IL. Call 630-629-9664 to make an appointment today.

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