

PROJECT NEWS

RECENT PUBLICATIONS BY OUR STAFF

Part of our mission is the dissemination of information regarding brain injury and spinal cord injury. Professional publications play a large role in communicating to the scientific and lay communities just what advances are being made in treatment and rehabilitation.

Some of our more recent publications include:

Werner PC. New medications for brain and spinal cord injury: Minimizing the "second" injury. *The Journal of Care Management* 1997; 2: 46-56.

Englander J, Cifu D, Wright J, et al. The impact of acute complications, fractures, and motor deficits on functional outcome and length of stay after a traumatic brain injury: A multi-center analysis. *J Head Trauma Rehabil* 1996; 11(5):15-26.

Karzmark P, Hall KM, Englander J. Late onset post-concussion symptoms following mild brain injury: The role of psychological factors. *Brain Injury* 1995; 9(1):21-26.

Hall KM, Mann N, High W, et al. Functional measures after traumatic brain injury: ceiling effects of FIM, FIM+FAM, DRS and CIQ. *J Head Trauma Rehabil* 1996; 11(5):27-39.

Stover LS, Hall KM, DeLisa JA, et al. System benefits. In Stover S, DeLisa JA, Whiteneck G (eds) *Spinal cord injury: Clinical outcomes from the model systems* 1995; Aspen Publications, Inc. Gaithersburg, MD.

For more publications or more information on these publications please call our project office at 408/295-9896 ext 10 or e-mail us at TBISCIProj@aol.com or visit our Web site (with a more complete listing of publications) at <http://members.aol.com/TBISCIProj/TBISCIProj.html>

BRAIN AND SPINAL CORD INJURY GRANTS INTERACT

Brain Injury University Meets First-Year Goals

On May 10, 1996, a group of five agencies in Santa Clara County that support people with brain injuries and their families, joined together to start a new program called B.I.U. (Brain Injury University). The mission of B.I.U. is to create programs that offer people with brain injuries and their families an opportunity to work on improving their lives. B.I.U. also promotes community awareness of the social and medical complexities and consequences of brain injury on affected individuals and their families.

B.I.U.'s vision starts with three main objectives: 1) to teach practical life skills in a classroom setting or through video and workbooks, 2) to offer the courses out in the community, for convenience to students, and 3) to increase knowledge of the prevalence and outcomes of brain injury.

The first year program goals were to: 1) assess the needs of the community, and 2) create and implement a pilot course to evaluate the success of a classroom instruction format. We have successfully met our first year goals.

Community Survey

A community survey was developed and administered to 70 individuals with brain injury. The survey results will be used in the strategic development of B.I.U. and the selection of future class subjects. The following is a brief overview of the results:

Top ten community needs are:

- Assistance in finding a job
- Peer support
- Job training
- General resources
- Social support
- Education
- Recreational activities
- Legal assistance
- Counseling services
- Financial support

Top ten B.I.U. classes requested:

- How to find/keep a job
- Behavior issues
- General brain injury
- Resources available
- Finding romance
- Social skills
- Medical issues
- General emotional issues
- Fatigue
- Anger

Pilot Course

On January 28, 29 and 30, classes were held at three community facilities that support people with brain injuries and their families: Santa Clara Valley Medical Center, Cypress Senior Center and the Adult Independence Development Center. All classes were filled to capacity with 70 participants. The feedback from the classes was excellent. Students reported that they were interested in attending other classes and gave rave reviews to class instruction, materials, and location.

—Continued on page 2

SAFETY EDUCATION/DISABILITY AWARENESS

Mark Your Calendars!

To celebrate National SAFE KIDS WEEK (May 4-10), the Santa Clara and San Mateo County SAFE KIDS Coalition will sponsor a special event at the Children's Discovery Museum and Guadalupe Park in San Jose. Children ages 3-8 will be guided through an "obstacle" course involving several activities that demonstrate safe behaviors, e.g., water safety, bicycle safety, school yard safety, etc. There will be booths and activities for the children to learn about many safety topics, and provide important information and literature for parents. Outside will be fire trucks, police cars, and a helicopter! The event is set for Saturday, May 10, 1997 from 11am-4pm.

A Strategic Plan for Preventing Disabilities

The California Office of Disability Prevention (ODP) has established a Five Year Plan to establish systems of surveillance, provide training and technical assistance, and identify risks and target interventions to reduce disability in California. One of the three major areas this plan addresses is injury-related disabilities caused by traumatic nervous system injury. In developing this plan the ODP relied on the guidance of community leaders in the area of injury prevention. The goals and recommendations are consistent with and supportive of the Center for Disease Control's national efforts. For a copy of the plan, please FAX your request to:

The Department of Health Services, Office of Disability Prevention
Att: Jeannie Galarpe, (916) 323-3682

Spring Is Just Around the Corner, So Here Are Some Reminders

- In 1995, 830 bicyclists were killed in crashes with motor vehicles and approximately 61,000 were injured. Young children (ages 0-14) accounted for 31% of these fatalities, making this the most frequent cause of injury-related deaths for young children.
- Most bicyclist fatalities are males (86%).
- Despite the fact that 70-80% of all fatal bicycle crashes involve head injuries, only 10-15% of all bicyclists wear bicycle helmets.
- The first bicycle helmet law was passed in California in 1986. This law was amended in 1993 to cover all children under the age of 18.
- Every \$10 bike helmet saves this country \$30 in direct health care costs.

—National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Legislative Fact Sheet September, 1996

Brain Injury University (from Page 1)

The success of B.I.U. came about through a collaborative effort of volunteers and professionals interested in the education of the community and improved well-being of individuals with brain injury and their families. The committee comprised many hardworking volunteers and professional representatives from these founding agencies: The Traumatic Brain Injury Project, Services for Brain Impaired, Santa Clara Valley Medical Center, Adult Independence Development Center, and the Office of Therapeutic Services. We are currently working on a strategic operations plan, funding strategy and ongoing efforts in course development.

If you are interested in learning more about B.I.U., or if you would like to participate or volunteer your time, please call **Avis Stafford** at (408) 923-1556. ■

FEATURED STAFF

GINA MORECI

Meet a VIP: Very Important Player

This month's staff spotlight is on **Gina Moreci**, a very important part of our team. Gina coordinates the TBI Peer Support Program at SCVMC and also manages a study looking at sei-



Gina Moreci

zures after brain injury.

Gina's interest in brain injury started after her brother Russ' injury about eight years ago. From a family member's perspective she knew that there was a lot

that could be done, both for the individual who is injured, as well as for their family and friends. She wanted to work in an area that would improve the quality of life for people with brain injuries. She completed a degree in Therapeutic Recreation and took a position at San Pedro Peninsula Rehabilitation Center in southern California.

Upon coming to work at the TBI Project, Gina took over the responsibility of the VIP (Very Important Person) Program and developed our TBI peer support program. Dedicated volunteers with brain injuries return to SCVMC's brain injury rehabilitation unit to talk with and listen to patients and families. The peer supporters meet regularly to share experiences and problem solve. Gina also coordinates our Posttraumatic Epilepsy study, an important study that is examining the incidence and risk of post-injury seizures and the need for long term seizure medications.

Community commitment runs strong in her family. Together with her mother, **Avis Stafford**, Gina is working on an exciting new project called Brain Injury University (see article on page 1 of this issue).

Gina is currently completing her Mas-

—Continued next page

SUPPORT CORNER

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI) SUPPORT GROUPS

- **Mild Brain Injury (MBI) Group**
For individuals in the community with brain injury, and friends and family. Meets the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 P.M. at the Cypress Senior Center, 403 So. Cypress Ave., San Jose. Contact **John Hatten**, (408) 295-9896, x18.
- **Very Important Patient (VIP) Group** Includes inpatients, outpatients, individuals in the community with brain injury, and friends and family. Meets the fourth Wednesday of each month at 7 P.M. at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center, Rehabilitation Conference Room. Contact **Gina Moreci**, (408) 295-9896, x19.

SPINAL CORD INJURY (SCI) SUPPORT GROUPS

- **SCI Support Group**
Includes individuals in the community with SCI, and friends and family. Meets the third Wednesday of each month at 7 P.M. at the Cypress Senior Center. Contact **Richard Patterson**, (408) 295-9896, x12.
- **SCI Women's Peer Support Group** Includes women in the community with SCI. Meets on the fourth Friday of the month from 11:30 A.M. to 1 P.M. in the Third Floor Conference Room, 2400 Moorpark Ave., San Jose. Contact **Janie Whiteford**, (408) 295-9896, x42. ■

Gina Moreci (from Page 2)

ters in Public Health at San Jose State. When she's not working or at school, Gina enjoys hiking, gardening, scuba diving, traveling, and crafts (Creative Memories photo projects).

Thank you Gina for all of your hard work and dedication! ■

PEER-ing into the Future!

The Spinal Cord Injury Peer Support Program at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center

At times everyone encounters barriers that become a source of frustration, confusion, and disappointment. Many times these barriers can be removed without assistance or support from others. However, there are instances when one desires assistance through a self-help support system. In response to this need, Santa Clara Valley Medical Center's Model System of Care for Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) offers peer support services to those consumers who are interested in a self-help support system.

Peer support is a service in which a person with a disability who has related experiences, knowledge, and coping skills assists other people with disabilities to manage, remove, or cope with their challenges or issues. The services provided are informal and are aimed at empowering the consumer to help himself or herself. This may involve: discussing feelings about similar experiences and emotions, identifying barriers, sharing information, tips, and resources, and locating recreational activities. In the SCI Peer Support Program the end goal is to enable the consumer to advocate for himself or herself.

Peer Supporters are not trained psychologists or psychiatrists. Supporting is a nondirective, non-judgmental activity. It is a process whereby a person (client) is empowered to gain new awareness of themselves and options available to them through the support offered by another person. Peers share a common identity or experience. The commonality may be age, gender, education, career, diagnosis, sexual orientation or other self-defined common experience. In the context of this program, peers are defined by their unique experiences. Therefore peer supporting refers to a person living with a spinal cord injury listening to/supporting another person with similar concerns and interests.

A peer support program is only as effective as the training of the peers. Potential volunteers are carefully screened prior to participating in the SCI Peer Support Program. The criteria used to select appropriate volunteers are: experience with SCI, positive references, and personal attributes such as genuineness, ability to listen, appropriate empathy and a positive regard for people. The peers are trained at least yearly by professionals, such as psychologists, social workers, and other experts in the areas of the grief process, active listening, communication, community resources and hospital procedures.

For more information on the SCI Peer Support Program contact **Richard Patterson**, SCI Peer Group Support Coordinator, at (408) 295-9896 ext. 12. ■

Resource Guides Available FREE

The Traumatic Brain Injury Resource Guide (TBIRD) and the *Spinal Cord Injury—For Your Information (SCI-FYI) Resource Guide* are now available online (Free!) Both are excellent guides for individuals living in northern California who want to know more about resources for those with spinal cord or traumatic brain injuries.

Set your browser to <http://members.aol.com/TBISCIProj/TBISCIProj.html> for more information. Or call (408) 295-9896 ext 10 for more information on how to order a printed copy of the TBIRD (\$15) or the SCI-FYI (\$13). ■

New Study: Parenting by Mothers with Spinal Cord Injury

When asked what a mother's occupation is, the best reply might sound something like this: she spends her day raising up tomorrow's leaders; she's the Chief Financial Officer, managing the yearly budget, accounts payable and accounts received; she's the Department Head of Nutrition Services; and, in her spare time she's the Director of Child Psychology and Pediatrics in her home-based operation.

...Seriously speaking, however, raising children these days is no easy task and can be a full-time job. Now consider the added challenge of parenting after suffering a spinal cord injury. What impact would a spinal cord injury have on the family system? How would a spinal cord injury change the family dynamics? What strategies do mothers with SCI currently employ?

These questions sparked the initiation

of a new study entitled "Parenting by Mothers with Spinal Cord Injuries." The study is based at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation in Northern New Jersey. Six model systems of SCI care have agreed to collaborate on the study, including Santa Clara Valley Medical Center.

Brief Summary

The relationship between parenting by mothers with spinal cord injuries and children's adjustment patterns will be examined at various ages of the children from six years of age up. Mothers will have been diagnosed with spinal cord injuries before their child reached age two. These mothers and children will be compared to mothers without disabilities and their children of comparable ages. This study will examine parenting by mothers with SCI both from a practical and psychological

standpoint. Moreover the day-to-day techniques which mothers with SCI utilize to care for their children will be assessed and described.

Participants will be asked to fill out several paper and pencil surveys (which could take a total of 3-5 hours). Although most of the questions are directed toward the parents, some questions are geared toward the children and will require their participation too.

Participants Needed

If you would be interested in participating in this study, or if you know somebody who might be a candidate for the study, or if you simply have questions, please give us a call at 1-800-352-1956 extension 17 or 20. As an incentive for participants' time, we will be offering a \$50 stipend to each mother and adult child participant. ■

SCI ResourceLine:

1-(800)-352-1956, ext. 24

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INTERACT

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