

## PROJECT NEWS

### NEW DIRECTOR

We are pleased to introduce **Tamara Bushnik, Ph.D.** as our new Director of Research and Co-Director of TBI and SCI Model Systems Grants at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center.

Dr. Bushnik's strong background and high energy level make her well qualified for this important position. She is a native Canadian, attaining her Ph.D. in Psychology/Neurosciences at the University of Ottawa and postdoctoral training at Stanford University. Most recently she has been the Research Manager for the Functional Magnetic Stimulation Lab at the Palo Alto VA Health Care System, Spinal Cord Injury Service. Her research has evolved from the biochemical and cellular factors involved in motivation in animals to clinical studies in expiratory muscle activation in individuals with spinal cord injury.

As Director of Research and Co-Director of the TBI & SCI Grants, her responsibilities will include overseeing the management of the two grants, conducting medical rehabilitation research, grant application writing, and professional publications and presentations. Dr. Bushnik takes over from Dr. Karyl Hall who officially retired last month, after more than 20 years with Santa Clara Valley Medical Center.

For more information about Tamara Bushnik, please see our Featured Staff article in this issue. Welcome Dr. Bushnik! ■

## BRAIN AND SPINAL CORD INJURY GRANTS

# INTERACT

## The New Valley Medical Center

Excerpted from,

### **Welcome to a Great Hospital!**

By Robert Sillen, Executive Director  
Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital Systems

Valley Medical Center is the single most important component of the healthcare delivery system in Santa Clara County. VMC is the only hospital in the County with an open door policy that guarantees access to needed medical care, regardless of ability to pay. As our mission states, we are "dedicated to the health of the whole community." As the *San Jose Mercury News* states, "...this is government at its kindest and best."

Photo: Luis Gonzales

After more than 120 years as an essential community resource, we have opened a new facility. The new Valley Medical Center main hospital includes acute care services such as coronary and medical intensive care; labor, delivery and recovery suites; neonatal intensive care; inpatient and outpatient surgery; system wide diagnostic imaging and an entire floor dedicated to pediatrics.

The 317,000 square-foot addition has 154 acute care beds. It has a complete network of data cabling with 45 miles of electrical wiring and an advanced system for transmitting images, data, messages, and medicine.



**"We are proud of this new state-of-the-art facility. All of our improvements have one main goal: to give our patients the best care."**

With state-of-the-art equipment, the new VMC is the perfect blend of high quality health care and high technology medicine. Our patients, employees and community deserve nothing less than the best. For more information about the new Valley Medical Center, call **Joy Alexiou** at (408) 885-4164. ■

**SCI ResourceLine:**  
**1-(800)-**  
**352-1956, ext. 24**

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

# Tamara Bushnik, Ph.D.

### Researcher with a Purpose

This issue's spotlight is on Tamara Bushnik, the newest member of the TBI & SCI Grants' team. Tamara is our new Director of Rehabilitation Research and Co-Director of both the TBI & SCI Grants. Dr. Bushnik was most



Tamara Bushnik

recently a Research Manager for the Spinal Cord Injury Service at the Veterans Administration hospital in Palo Alto, California, where she coordinated ongoing research projects

and planned and implemented new research.

While at the VA she worked on several important studies. Among them:

#### *Changes in Kidney Function over Time in Individuals with SCI*

This study identified risk factors specific to spinal cord injury for decline in kidney function. One important finding was that aging affects the kidney function of people with spinal cord injury the same way as individuals who are not spinal cord injured.

#### *Magnetic Stimulation to Activate Spinal Nerves to Produce a Cough Response in Individuals with Quadriplegia*

Damage to the spinal cord often results in the person having problems coughing and clearing his/her airway. Magnetic stimulation of the proper

spinal nerves can force air from the lungs like a cough and may eventually be an alternative to therapies like quad cough.

#### *Incidence of Abdominal Aorta Aneurysms*

Individuals with spinal cord injuries have different degrees of immobility, depending on the level of their injury. This study looked at the impact that differences in circulation due to immobility have on the development of aneurysms.

Her research interests lie with applied

research, especially in research where the results make a real difference for individuals. While her most recent research experience has been with spinal cord injury, she looks forward to being able to make an impact on the lives of individuals with brain injury as well.

Tamara's personal interests include backpacking, hiking, scuba diving and traveling. She moved here from Eastern Canada six years ago and says she doesn't miss the snow. As a Canadian, though, she is torn between the San Jose Sharks and the Ottawa Senators.

## SAFETY EDUCATION/ DISABILITY AWARENESS

### Thanks, Allstate!

Included in the last *InterACT* was a "One Minute Car Seat Checkup." It was a list of items to check if you are responsible for placing a child in a car. We'd like to thank Allstate Insurance Corp., especially Mary MacDonald, Marketing Division Consultant for Allstate Insurance Company, for providing us with 5,000 copies of the flyer for our newsletter.

### Good News for Safety Education and Disability Awareness!

The TBI and SCI Grants, in collaboration with the Valley Medical Center Foundation, has been awarded a one year grant to provide information to elementary schools about brain and spinal cord injuries, how they occur, and how they can be avoided. The grant is a part of Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) Safe Communities Network which is governed by the National Highway Traffic Services Administration (NHTSA). Various community agencies will be participating in the six-week elementary school curriculum for grades one through three. The curriculum was developed by the Think First Foundation. ■

## Study Announcement

### Community Integration Study

We are seeking men and women with SCI who are of Asian or American Indian descent to participate in an extensive telephone survey. The survey will help us learn more about the well-being of people with spinal cord injury, including both physical and emotional health. A stipend of \$50 is being offered to participants who complete the interview. If you or someone you know is interested in participating in this study, please don't hesitate to call us at 1-800-352-1956 ext. 17 or 24. ■

## 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 **Dan Mayclin**, (408) 295-9896, x19.
- **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 **Dan Mayclin**, (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 Thursday 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 12:00 P.M. to 2 P.M. Contact **Janie Whiteford**, (408) 295-9896, x42, for the location. ■



## Web Resources from the TBI and SCI Grants

*Hey, the TBI & SCI Projects have some Internet resources you should know about! Some pertain to spinal cord injury, others to brain injury. They are designed to be useful to consumers (individuals with injuries and their families and friends) as well as to professionals. So log on, browse away, and let us know what you think. Send email to [interact@tbi-sci.org](mailto:interact@tbi-sci.org)*

### The TBIRD (Traumatic Brain Injury Resource Directory)

[www.tbi-sci.org/tbird](http://www.tbi-sci.org/tbird)

The TBIRD lists hundreds of TBI resources in its 27 chapters. This directory is an excellent reference for anyone in the Santa Clara Valley (and beyond) needing information on services and/or programs for those with traumatic brain injury.

### The SCI-FYI (Spinal Cord Injury-For Your Information) Resource Guide

[www.tbi-sci.org/scifyi](http://www.tbi-sci.org/scifyi)

The SCI-FYI is a comprehensive reference for spinal cord injury related resources in the Santa Clara Valley (and beyond). Over a thousand people visit the SCI-FYI website every month. Why haven't you?

### Project Enable

[www.projectenable.org](http://www.projectenable.org)

Project Enable was originally started to give patients on SCVMC's spinal cord injury unit high-speed access to the Internet. Visit the site to find out more about this exciting program. Make sure you check out *The Free Wheeling Guide to the Internet*.

### COMBI (Center for Outcome Measurement in Brain Injury)

[www.tbims.org/combi](http://www.tbims.org/combi)

An online resource for those needing detailed information and support in regards to outcome measures for brain injuries. The measures included in the COMBI are commonly used in the field of brain injury.

### TBIMS (Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems)

[www.tbims.org](http://www.tbims.org)

Did you ever wonder about those TBI Model Systems? Find out where the TBI Model System Projects are, who runs them, and what they are up to. There is information about the TBI National Database, and the entire collection of the *Facts and Figures* newsletters that are put out by the National Data Center.

### SCI-Ring (The Spinal Cord Injury Ring)

[www.tbi-sci.org/sciring](http://www.tbi-sci.org/sciring)

The Spinal Cord Injury Ring is a collection of cooperative SCI web sites that are all linked through the SCI Ring. The neat thing about the Ring is that you can easily go from one SCI site to another. Personal pages, professional pages, and business pages are all represented. At last count there were 78 members of the SCI Ring! Do you have a website that should be included? ■

## ALUMNI UPDATE

*Whatever happened to... ?*



### Karen Edge

Karen Edge and her brother Joe were injured in 1989 while riding a motorcycle. There was a crash, and both Joe and Karen were flung from the motorcycle. Neither were wearing helmets; both sustained traumatic brain injuries. Karen spent approximately two weeks in acute care, then another three weeks in rehabilitation. She was discharged four days before her 19th birthday. She stayed in California for a short time, then moved to Boston for a few months. She and her boyfriend broke up and Karen returned to California, where she met Noah.

Karen and Noah moved between Arizona, California, and Oregon (where they were married in April, 1997). They have two sons, ages 6 and 3.

Karen has always had a desire to complete her education, and while in Arizona she completed a medical secretary program. When she returned to

## COMING SOON! BACK ISSUES ONLINE

Back issues of *InterACT* will soon be available online in PDF (Portable Document Format). Developed by Adobe, PDF files are viewable and usable across many different platforms. Adobe has a free PDF reader called **Adobe Acrobat Reader** which will allow you to use PDF files. You can download Adobe Acrobat Reader at:

<http://www.adobe.com/prodindex/acrobat/readstep.html>

We are in the process of converting our back issues of *InterACT* to PDF format, and uploading them onto the Web. When this project is completed, these back issues will be available at

<http://www.tbi-sci.org/backissue.html> ■

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California she completed her work for a high school diploma. Now she's getting ready to enter a four-year program in visual graphic design. As if that's not enough, she also cares for two other children besides her own in her home.

When asked what, if anything, Karen would want people to know about her or her brain injury she said, "Wear a helmet!" Much of the grief she and her brother experienced wouldn't have happened had they worn helmets. Next, "Keep your head up! Life is a roller coaster, with lots of ups and downs. Enjoy life!" ■

## PHONE EXTENSIONS

The main number for the TBI/SCI Projects is (408) 295-9896.

Debra Burdsall . . . . .	24
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## INTERACT

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