Children and Adolescents with Traumatic Brain Injury

They’re not just little adults.
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Causes by Age

- Infant  Abuse
- Toddler  Falls, MVA passenger
- Preschooler  Falls, MVA passenger and pedestrian
Causes by Age

- Elementary school children
  - MVA passenger and pedestrian, bicycling, falls, recreation injuries

- Adolescents
  - MVA driver and passenger, sports, assaults, gun shots
Scope of TBI in Children and Adolescents

- Most frequent cause of death and disability (over 41% of all child deaths)
- Over 30,000 children have permanent disabilities each year
- Over 500,000 new cases each year
- Translates into 1 in every 500 students
- Mild injuries are under-reported

Source: Centers for Disease Control
Prevalence of TBI x Age and Gender

Male (n = 1100)

Female (n = 526)
Recurrent Crises Over Time

- Emergency Dept
- ICU
- Hospital Care
- Rehabilitation
- Coming Home
- Back to School
Emotional trauma for families

- “WHEN IT HAPPENED”
- Immediate crisis of survival
- The coma vigil
- Decision making process for life supports
Myths and Facts about Brain Injury in Children and Youth
Myth  Younger the child is when injured, the better the recovery.

Fact  Younger brain is more vulnerable to damage.
Myth: Looks good = is good

Fact: Physical recovery outpaces cognitive recovery.

Fact: Better the student looks, harder it is to recognize cognitive needs. Misidentified as ADD or LD
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Severe injury means permanent disability..</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fact</td>
<td>Disabilities range from physical, cognitive, behavioral, social, and communicative effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact</td>
<td>Not all disabilities are equal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myth</td>
<td>TBI means student is eligible for special education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fact</td>
<td>Diagnosis not automatic qualifier for eligibility.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fact</td>
<td>Educational impact may change as brain matures and school work changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myth</td>
<td>Tests in normal range, therefore can learn okay.</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Fact</td>
<td>Testing old knowledge not indicative for new learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact</td>
<td>Testing environment not indicative of classroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Myth    Time heals.
Fact    Time reveals.
Children are affected by brain injury differently than adults

- Less likely to lose consciousness
- Quicker physical recovery
- Damage to developing brain
- Harder to learn new skills
- Long term impact on development
Impact on Families over Time

- Guilt over failed to protect
- Fear of risk taking
- Anniversary reactions
- Marital conflicts
- Additional births
- Competing needs of siblings
Siblings

- Feeling left behind and left out
- Competing for care and attention
- Maturation and knowledge
- Changes in sibling relationship
- Future caregiver expectations
Long-Term Stresses on Families

- Uncertainty of development
- Ongoing need to educate educators
- Dearth of experts in community
- Stress of adolescence
- Approaching adulthood
- Aging of parents
What every parent wishes...

- Decent income
- Safe place to live
- Friends and support
- A life with meaning
- People who care
- Person to love and be loved
- Fulfillment of dreams