

Upcoming Events

BABICM Summer Conference - Minding the Gap, who is safeguarding the vulnerable? Manchester	10th June 2010
Police FLO Annual Conference York	21st - 22nd June 2010
BIRT Seminar - Challenging & changing times for all stakeholders in brain injury rehabilitation York	23rd June 2010
Headway Way Ahead Conference Warwick	9th - 11th July 2010
Theo's Games Sheffield	18th July 2010

The Sheffield Acute Brain Injury Pathway - Pioneering Coordinated Services *by Dr Rajiv Singh*

The management of head injury is complex, demanding and requires a variety of specialist skills. Without proper planning at hospitals, patients can end up under a number of different departments, and Brain injury specialists in rehabilitation medicine are rarely involved at an early stage. There is often no coordination of overall care needs and the lack of responsibility leaves patients and families with an unsatisfactory service, and hospital trusts with a clinical governance risk.

This was certainly the situation in Sheffield, or indeed anywhere in the UK, prior to the introduction of an acute brain injury care pathway in 2007. This was the first such pathway in the UK, and it has undoubtedly improved the quality of care for all brain injury admissions.

Prior to the introduction of the pathway, head injuries were generally allocated to whichever element of hospital care met the patient's immediate need on admission. This often happened without due thought to overall coordination of services or even the need for assessment or treatment of the brain injury itself. Patients could end up in general surgery, orthopaedics, neurosurgery, ENT, Care of Elderly or A&E beds, or even discharged following assessment. As a result, families were put under strain and there was frequently no follow up for the patient in relation to the head injury itself.

The introduction of National Head Injury guidelines and impetus from the National Services Framework for neurological conditions, as well as a general awareness of the clinical governance risk, led to stakeholders in brain injury working to set up a specialist pathway in 2007.

A new Head Injury Observations Unit was set up at the Northern General Hospital and an Acute Brain Injury Team consisting of a specialist doctor, a nurse specialist and a social worker, was created.

Contact the team

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All admissions with brain injury are now admitted to the observation unit unless they require surgery or an intensive care bed. Each day, the team joins the A&E ward round and, after 48 hours of admission, takes over responsibility for head injury patients. The team is a key link between the different services involved in brain injury, including services in the community, and it facilitates smooth transitions and appropriate follow up or review by relevant specialists.

If longer admission is required, then transfer to neurorehabilitation beds is arranged. A Brain Injury clinic has been set up for follow-up and for those patients discharged from A&E. The team social worker has a clear role in liaising with families to provide support, and can signpost to other resources such as Headway or assistance with state benefits.

One of the key benefits of the pathway has been to educate hospital staff as to the significance of brain injury and its treatment. A rolling programme to train nursing staff, junior doctors and therapists is in place, and the profile of brain injury management has been raised as a result. The team act as willing advocates for the future development of regional brain injury services across South Yorkshire.

Patient and relatives' feedback to date has been excellent, but more development is needed. Future projects will look at developing out-patient capacity and community links.

The pathway has extended the role of rehabilitation into acute services and demonstrated the importance of actively supporting individuals and families at all stages of rehabilitation. Other centres are now looking at copying the service, and there is a real chance that it will become a standard model used to provide better brain injury services across the UK.

Dr Rajiv Singh is a Consultant in Brain Injury Rehabilitation Medicine at the Osborn Unit, Northern General hospital, Sheffield.

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Neuro Focus

This newsletter was produced by 'the Neurotrama Team,' specialists in brain and spinal injury in South Yorkshire and the East Midlands.

Spring/Summer 2010 Edition



Tracy Osborne with her partner Steve



Tracy's Rehabilitation Success Story after Drink Driver Nightmare *by Rachael Aram*

One dark November evening Tracy Osborne's life was turned upside down by a drink driver. She and her partner, Steve, were returning home from visiting Tracy's father when another driver crashed head-on into their vehicle. Here, Tracy speaks out about the drink driving that almost cost her her life.

Tracy suffered horrific injuries as a result of the collision, including a severe head injury, multiple fractures to her legs, arms and collarbone, and abdominal injuries including a laceration of her liver. She had to be resuscitated twice, and underwent major surgery. As a result of her injuries, Tracy sustained a severe brain injury, and required specialist rehabilitation. She underwent a lengthy spell of inpatient rehab at the Oakwood Centre for Rehabilitation Medicine in Rotherham before being discharged home some 10 months after the collision. Following her discharge, she attended outpatient rehab at the Park Centre in Rotherham.

Tracy struggled hugely with reading, writing and her memory. Her mobility was limited and she required a wheelchair outdoors. She couldn't dress herself or pick up her granddaughter, and had to relearn tasks such as cooking; things that she had taken for granted before the accident. She was forced to move house to a specially adapted bungalow because her home was no longer suitable for her.

However, while Tracy was the first to admit that the collision has changed her life beyond recognition, after spending time in a

specialist rehabilitation unit at Daniel Yorath House in Leeds, her independence soared. Tracy is now able to dress herself, and her mobility has improved to the point where she requires a wheelchair only when travelling long distances. She has learned to manage her memory problems by using a wall planner, and is able to attend the gym and go swimming with a support worker. Tracy socialises at a local craft club, and has attended college to improve her literacy skills.

Tracy has benefited from specialist support and counselling, and she now thinks positively about the future, rather than feeling angry and upset about what has happened to her. Tracy says, "Drink drivers ruin lives, and all for a drink. It just seems so pointless. I am now looking forward to making the most of my life with the skills I have learned to help me do as much as I possibly can".

Rachael Aram, with the brain injury team agrees. "Drink driving kills 44 people every day. To be added to that figure are the other people whose lives are completely changed like Tracy's. Tracy is a shining example of how even in the most difficult of circumstances, with the right support and rehabilitation, life can really mean something again".

Brake, the road safety charity, are encouraging members of the public to report people they know to be driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs by calling the police or Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**.



National 3 Peaks Challenge

by Neil Whiteley



Neil Whiteley and Stacy Gee have successfully completed the National 3 Peaks Challenge in order to raise funds for Neurocare.

Neurocare is a Sheffield based charity which raises funds purely to buy cutting edge neurosurgical care for the benefit of critically injured patients at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital in the city. As a result of Neurocare's work, the Hallamshire has access to state of the art equipment that the NHS is unable to fund.

Every year, the dedicated team at the hospital's neurosurgery unit save the lives of hundreds of critically injured patients, with an increasing number of people surviving thanks to advances in technology. Without the money raised by Neurocare, many of these advances could not be funded.

The 24 hour challenge involved climbing the 3 highest mountains in each of Scotland, England and Wales – Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon, a combined height of 3407 metres and distance of 27 miles! The national challenge is a notoriously tough feat bearing in mind the geographical distance between the peaks, and the added difficulty of coping with lack of sleep. Scafell Pike is actually climbed during the night, posing obvious dangers with navigation and safety.

Neil and Stacy completed the challenge, managing to return safely and in one piece. Neil commented: "we both had our highs and lows but it was well worth it. The physical effort didn't really hit home until after we got back on the second day, when I was barely able to climb the stairs at home. When's the next one?!"

Their efforts raised over £1500 in total, after Irwin Mitchell generously topped up the fundraising with an extra £250.

Lesley Eland, Chief Executive of Neurocare, was very pleased with the duo's efforts. She said, "I would like to say a huge, massive thank you to Stacy and Neil for completing the Neurocare 3 Peaks Challenge. We really are so thankful and appreciative of their support. It was also wonderful to see how Irwin Mitchell staff got behind Stacy and Neil, to support them with both morale and sponsorship, we are so thankful to them all."

You can read more about Neurocare and their current projects by visiting their website - <http://www.neurocare.org.uk>.



Supporting Leonard Cheshire

by Joanne Witherington


Joanne Witherington showed her support to Leonard Cheshire Disability by visiting some residents in Leicestershire in January, helping to organise an evening of entertainment.

Leonard Cheshire Disability supports over 21,000 disabled people in the UK and works in 52 countries. They campaign for change and provide innovative services that give disabled people the opportunity to live life their way. The range of services provided includes care homes, supported living, domiciliary support, day services, resource centres, rehabilitation, respite care, personal support and training and assistance for those looking for work.

Thanks to Jo and her colleagues, the residents enjoyed a performance of the show 'Tiddley Om Pom Pom!' from the theatre company Frantic. The show included singing, dancing, poetry and comedy – something for everyone to enjoy.

After the show, both residents and staff were treated to a selection of party food and drinks. The Volunteer Co-ordinator at the centre, Claire McLeod, said "The event you planned was fantastic and everybody that attended had a really great time. Frantic theatre was really entertaining; everybody I have spoken to loved everything about the evening."

Jo added, "It was really great to do something for an organisation like Leonard Cheshire who work so tirelessly to support people with disability. A number of our clients benefit from the good work done by the organisation, and it was nice to give something back".



theheadinjury.com

The new website launched by Irwin Mitchell Solicitors, offering specialist services and information dedicated to brain injury survivors, their families and carers and professionals working in the brain injury field.



Women Working in Brain Injury Networking Event

by Caroline Jepson



On Thursday 18th March 2010, Caroline Jepson and Caroline Mitchell hosted a special event for women working in brain injury across South Yorkshire and the neighbouring regions.

The principal aim of the evening was to allow women working with brain injured clients to network and catch up with colleagues and contacts old and new. The turnout for the event was fantastic, with delegates coming along from all fields; from nursing to occupational therapy, case managers to clinicians.

Karen Ledger, therapist and consultant, led a thought-provoking session on style, offering advice and tips on fashion and the importance of self-confidence. There were representatives on hand from a fashion boutique, along with a custom jewellery designer, hair technicians, and a beauty therapist, who were happy to speak to the delegates about their style and offer further personalised advice where required.

The feedback from all the delegates was extremely positive, with everyone enjoying the opportunity to relax with friends and colleagues (and a glass of wine!), and to learn a bit more about themselves in the process.

It is hoped that another event will be organised for later in the year, with some interesting suggestions being offered by the delegates for a topic/focus for the evening. So keep your eyes peeled for more information later on in the year!

For any follow up advice or information about the event, please contact Caroline Jepson on caroline.jepson@irwinmitchell.com.



Charity events

by Stacy Gee

Neurocare launched their first 5km "Head Start" event around the lakes in Rother Valley on Sunday 18 April 2010. Participants could run, walk or hop the 5km, treat it as a serious athletic event or turn up in fancy dress! The event was open to all ages and abilities, families were encouraged to participate, and the entire route was wheelchair friendly.

As can be seen from our involvement in fundraising activities, Neurocare is a charity close to our hearts as many of our clients receive life saving treatment on the neurosciences wards at the Hallamshire. Stacy Gee from our team took part in Head Start this year.

If you would like more information on Neurocare events, please contact Stacy on stacy.gee@irwinmitchell.com or Emma Douglas at Neurocare on emma@neurocare.org.uk, or call her on 0114 267 6464.



Carer's Rights & Benefits

Factsheet Now Available

Carers are often an essential part of life for someone who has suffered a serious injury. For someone who has suffered a brain injury, carers may be required for the rest of their lives to assist with activities of daily living, and to provide ongoing support and guidance.

As time, effort and attention is understandably focused on the person with the injury, carers may find that they are not looking after their own needs, whether emotional, financial or health orientated.

We have prepared a special factsheet aimed at supporting carers by, amongst other things:

- providing tips for getting practical help and advice;
- ensuring they are claiming all the welfare benefits they are entitled to;
- outlining their rights in terms of employment and care assessments.

The factsheet can be found on our specialist head injury site within the Resource Centre at:

www.theheadinjury.com/resource-centre.

Please feel free to alert any carers you feel may benefit from the information available, or alternatively to print off copies from the website to pass on to friends or colleagues.