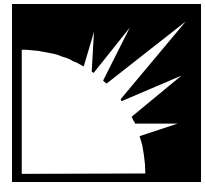


TBI TODAY

NEWS, IDEAS, AND RESOURCES FROM THE VIRGINIA TBI MODEL SYSTEM



THE VIRGINIA TBIMS TEAM

EDITOR

Margie Martinez, B.A.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Jeffrey Kreutzer, Ph.D.

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

David Cifu, M.D.

PROJECT COORDINATOR

Jenny Marwitz, M.A.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

William Walker, M.D.

BIOSTATISTICIAN

Adam Sima, Ph.D.

DISSEMINATION COORDINATOR

Kelli Gary, Ph.D.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Jeong Han Kim, Ph.D.

RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Amma Agyemang, PhD.

Kristin Graham, PhD.

Nancy Hsu, Psy.D.

Herman Lukow, Ph.D.

Melody Moadab, M.S.

Margie Martinez, B.A.

Abby Welch, B.S.

DIRECT CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Margie Martinez

P.O. Box 980542

Richmond, VA 23298-0542

(804) 828-5781

Email:

mariegrace.martinez@vcuhealth.org

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Simplify to Take a Load Off Your Mind

by Michael Cerreto

A traumatic brain injury's impact on your mind can limit your ability to do many things at once. You may experience a slowness in your thoughts, conversations, and actions. These situations require you to limit the time pressure you feel when performing activities throughout your day. You need to enhance the amount of time you give yourself to perform tasks and limit multi-tasking.

According to a study by Fasotti et al., after teaching patients how to reduce the time pressure they experience on tasks throughout the day, participants used more self-management strategies and had better performance on tasks requiring attention and memory.



By giving yourself more time and by simplifying activities, you reduce the pressure on your mental processing and enable yourself to better focus, remember, and stay on track.

Before you start each day, imagine the activities ahead of you. Are there multiple tasks that need to be done at the same time or tasks you can only accomplish by rushing? If so, you need to determine what to drop or change in your schedule to reduce the pressure on your time and mind. You can also create an emergency plan to keep your day simple (such as saying "no" to new activities) if something unexpected happens that puts pressure on you.

Michael Cerreto, MS, CPCRT, CSC, LDR is a Certified Cognitive Rehabilitation Therapist with **A Talented Mind Clinic** in Richmond, Virginia. He helps children, adolescents, and adults with a TBI improve the quality of their daily lives. He also facilitates **The Comeback Project** that is a free, private online community for brain injury survivors and their families. You can join the community to get the support you need at: a-talented-mind.mightybell.com. If you have any ideas for a future article about cognitive rehabilitation, please contact Michael at cerreto@atalentedmind.com.



Mark Your Calendar

Richmond Supportive Survivors

- ♦ **When:** Tuesdays 6-8pm
- ♦ **Location:** Regency Mall Food Court, 1420 Parham Road, Richmond, VA 23229
- ♦ **Contact:** Ted Taylor at (804) 852-6644 or taylorted58@yahoo.com

Richmond Aphasia Support Group

- ♦ **When:** 2nd Thursday of every month 6-7pm
- ♦ **Location:** First Unitarian Universalist Church, 1000 Blanton Ave, Richmond, VA 23221
- ♦ **Contact:** Lynn Burris at (804) 439-2657 or Jan Thomas at rva.aphasia@gmail.com

Richmond Support Group for Adults with TBI, Family, Friends

- ♦ **When:** 3rd Monday of every month at 6:15pm
- ♦ **Location:** Children's Hospital Auditorium, 2924 Brook Road, Richmond, VA 23220
- ♦ **Contact:** Christine Baggini at (804) 355-5748

TGIF: Social Group for Adults with TBI and Family

- ♦ **When:** 1st Friday of every month
- ♦ **Contact:** Email Aleana McClellan at mcclellana@chesterfield.gov or call (804) 751-4134 to get on the mailing list.

41st Brain Injury Rehabilitation Conference

- ♦ **When:** May 4-5, 2017 (Pre-Conference May 3)
- ♦ **Location:** Williamsburg Double Tree by Hilton Hotel
- ♦ **Contact:** Please visit www.williamsburgtbiconference.com for more info or call (804) 355-5748

If you have an upcoming event of interest to the Brain Injury community in Virginia, we would be glad to consider including it here. Please call (804) 828-3704 or email jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org.

Kreutzer Awarded 2017 Jennett Plum Award

Jeffrey Kreutzer, Ph.D., principal investigator of the Virginia TBI Model System and director of neuropsychology and rehabilitation psychology at VCU, was awarded the International Brain Injury Association's 2017 Jennett Plum Award for Clinical Achievement in the Field of Brain Injury Medicine.

The award is given every two years to clinicians and researchers who have made substantive and historical research contributions to the field of traumatic brain injury through clinical, translational, or basic science research.



Dr. Kreutzer was chosen in recognition of the impact of his clinical research on the field of brain injury medicine. He was presented the award and gave the Jennett Plum Award Lecture at the 12th International Brain Injury Association World Congress in New Orleans March 29 - April 1. Congratulations, Dr. Kreutzer!

The 2017 Brain Injury Rehabilitation Conference: Practical Solutions to Real World Problems

The Williamsburg Brain Injury Rehabilitation Conference will celebrate its 41st consecutive year this May.

The conference is designed primarily for multidisciplinary rehabilitation professionals and others who serve individuals with brain injuries and their families, including: case managers, vocational rehabilitation specialists, neuro/psychologists, counselors, physicians, social workers, special education teachers, and more. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) will be available for a variety of disciplines.

The conference will take place May 4-5. There will also be a pre-conference day of workshops on Wednesday, May 3. For more information on guest speakers, schedules, cost, and registration, please visit www.williamsburgtbiconference.com.

DEAR PAT,

I'm writing because I need some advice about how to help my husband. Ken was hit by a car while running on the road last year. He spent 3 weeks in the hospital fighting for his life, and when he was better, they sent him to a rehab place to work on walking and talking. Ken doesn't remember what happened to him nor the time he spent in the hospital. I was told that he had a severe brain injury and would not get that memory back. The doctor also told me it would take a while for him to seem more like himself again, though he will probably not be the same person.

There are a number of things about Ken that have been worrying me, as well as frustrating me. The one that comes to mind is that he loses his train of thought all the time. We can't seem to make it through a simple conversation without him forgetting what we're talking about. Or he'll be in the middle of cooking some food and wander outside, forgetting that he left the stove on. He gets distracted so easily! And his attention is very short.

What I am truly concerned about and writing about is my husband's lack of awareness of his problems. He thinks he's doing fine and is quite content with how things are at home. He also thinks he can be left home alone. I do appreciate his positive attitude and laid back thinking. At the same time, I'm afraid he's going to burn down the house or get seriously hurt! Is there anything I can do or say that will help him improve his awareness? Would I be making things worse by bringing my concerns to his attention?

PAT'S RESPONSE:

Lack of awareness or poor insight is a common problem after brain injury. Survivors may not be aware that problems with memory, attention, judgment, or slowed thinking are causing them difficulty. They could feel like there's nothing wrong with them and that nobody understands how badly they want to live on their own, drive a car, or return to work. It is not unusual for the individuals with a brain injury to wonder what's wrong with *you* or others in their social circle. Awareness of difficulties after brain injury typically improves with time as the person heals. Some survivors, however, seem to take longer to get their awareness back.




Helping to improve awareness is an important goal for you and Ken to work on together. First, you can help him to write down all the events related to the accident and his hospital stay. This exercise will increase his understanding about how the accident has impacted his life and your family. Keep the list of events related to the accident nearby. He may come to realize the seriousness of his injury and how far he has come in the last year.

When the fact that he's had a brain injury has sunk in, Ken may be able to handle some gentle feedback from you. You could talk to him about things he may wish to work on in the future to get better and stay safe. Asking questions is a good way to get people thinking about things. When you notice your husband having trouble with conversations, you may say something like, "You seem to have gotten lost. What was the last thing you remember us talking about?" Don't lose sight of the positive things he can do. Praise him often!

In the meantime, make sure you continue to carefully monitor your husband's activities and try to keep him safe from danger. Encourage him to try out different ways of doing things that may be less risky.

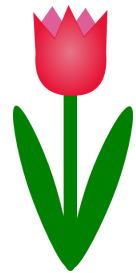
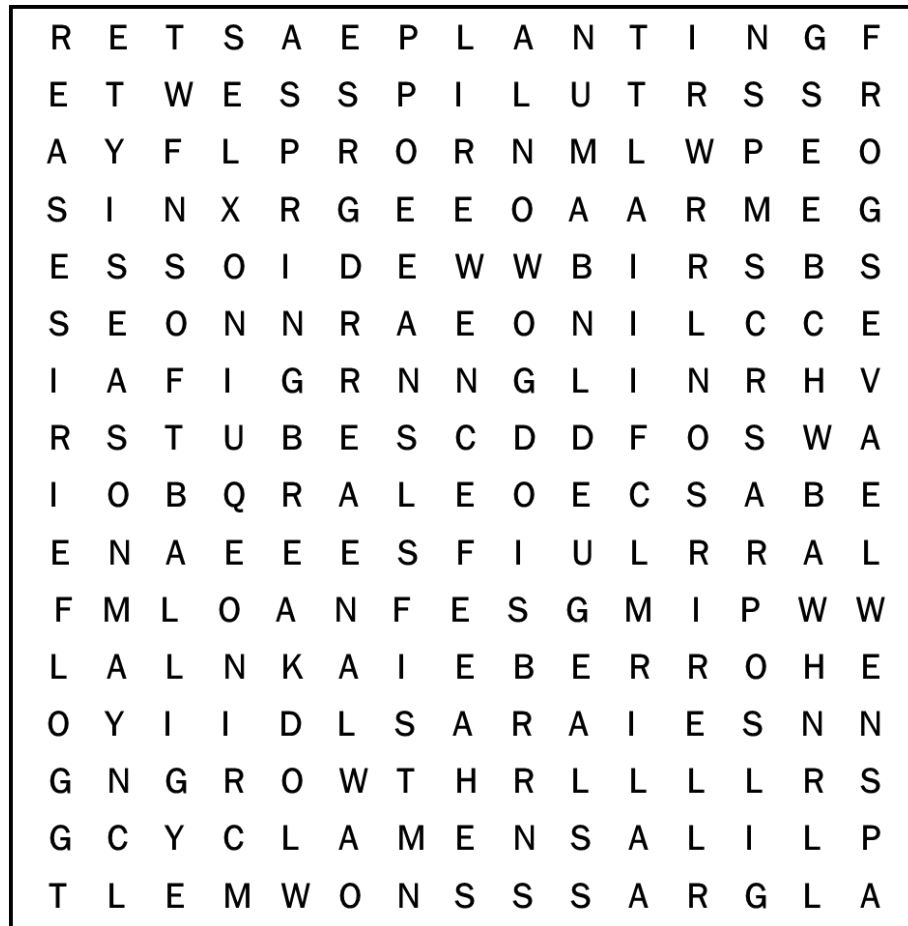
(Cont'd on page 5)



Pat answers your personal questions about brain injury with compassion and practical advice. However, advice from Pat's column should not substitute any consultation with a doctor or rehabilitation specialist. The identity of individuals submitting questions to "Chat with Pat" is kept strictly confidential.

Springtime Word Find

JUST FOR FUN



See if you can find the following words in the word find above. Words can be forward, backward, diagonal, horizontal, and vertical. If you get stumped, answers are on page 7!

ALLERGIES	EASTER	GREEN	RENEWAL
APRIL	EQUINOX	GROWTH	SEASON
BASEBALL	FLOWERS	LILIES	SNOWMELT
BEEES	FROGS	MAY	SPRING CLEANING
DAFFODILS	GOLF	PLANTING	TULIPS
DANDELIONS	GRASS	RAIN	WARMER



Questions for Pat or the FAQ column are welcomed.

Send them to:

"ASK PAT" OR "FAQ"

P.O. BOX 980542. RICHMOND, VA 23298-0542

or e-mail: jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org



(Chat, cont'd)

You could help him learn new recipes for cooking with the microwave or buy him a book on making sandwiches. With your enthusiasm and support, you can help improve his awareness of post-injury problems without ruining his self-confidence.

Support groups are a great way to get feedback from others, if you wish to recruit more people in helping your husband become more aware. Your local Brain Injury Association likely has a list of support groups you and your husband can attend. To contact the Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA), you may call their National Brain Injury Information Center (1-800-444-6443) or send them an e-mail at info@biausa.org. The website for BIAA (www.biausa.org) provides links to state chapters and additional brain injury resources. You may also write BIAA for more information at 1608 Spring Hill Road, Suite 110, Vienna, VA 22182.

Frequently Asked Questions

THE INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THE FAQ IS INTENDED TO FAMILIARIZE THE PUBLIC WITH ISSUES RELATED TO TBI. NO INFORMATION PROVIDED HEREIN SHOULD BE CONSTRUED AS THERAPEUTIC ADVICE OR AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR CONSULTATION WITH A COMPETENT MEDICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL.

QUESTION: What can I do to not fly off the handle at my family and friends? Ever since my fall at work, I get irritated, annoyed, and angered easily. I've been told that I have a short fuse. I don't want to be that person people try to avoid.



ANSWER: Anger and frustration are common reactions to the limitations posed by your treating physician and other professionals following a brain injury. It is understandable that you would feel overwhelmed by many problems that occurred as the result of your accident. In addition, the injured brain has less ability to control emotions and has become more sensitive to stress. Here are some suggestions to help you to better manage your anger and irritability:

- ♦ Don't say or do the first thing that comes to your mind. Counting to ten can help you get into the habit of thinking about ways to respond and people's reactions before you speak or act.
- ♦ Consider leaving the situation. Doing so may be better than saying or doing something you'll regret.
- ♦ Tell yourself to relax; breathe deeply and slowly.
- ♦ Explain yourself calmly. Be positive and sensitive to other peoples' feelings. Doing so will make it easier for others to understand you.
- ♦ Develop new and constructive ways to deal with anger. For example, go running or work out, scream into a pillow, write in your journal, or hit baseballs.
- ♦ Think about situations that often bring on your anger. Plan ways to deal with these situations ahead of time.
- ♦ Talk to a trusted friend, family member, or counselor about other ways to cope with and express your feelings in positive ways.
- ♦ Recognize that you have the power to control your emotions. Controlling your emotions is a skill. Practice and you'll get better.

Survivor Stories Wanted!

Recovering from a brain injury can be very difficult. Sometimes, one of the most helpful and inspiring things is simply hearing from other survivors who have gone through recovery and faced the same challenges. Are you a survivor with a story you'd like to share? If so, then we'd like to hear it, and it might get into a future issue of TBI Today!

Submit to: jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org

or

TBI Today, VCU P.O. Box 980542
Richmond, VA 23298-0542



HAVE YOU MET MARGIE MARTINEZ, B.A.?

Margie Martinez, B.A. works as a Research Specialist in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). She primarily conducts follow-up interviews and collects data for the TBI Model Systems Project at VCU, which has been providing important information to help understand brain injury and recovery. Margie is also the editor of the TBI Today Newsletter.

Margie grew up in Richmond, Virginia and graduated from the University of Virginia 2016 with a bachelor's degree in both

Psychology and French. Her ever increasing passion for research stems from her previous roles as an undergrad in multiple psychology labs at UVA, including the Implicit Social Cognition Lab, which studies less conscious attitudes that influence our judgments and behavior, and the Children's Learning Clinic, which focused on behavioral and educational outcomes for children with Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). She continues to volunteer with two of UVA's Child Development Labs, which study how children come to understand the world around them.



In her free time, Margie likes to hang out with friends, spend time with family, catch up on TV shows, do puzzles, and play games.

Get to Know the TBI Model System

The Traumatic Brain Injury Model System (TBIMS) Centers program began in 1987 and consists of 16 centers across the US that are competitively funded for 5 years by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR). The TBIMS Centers are situated in centers of excellence for clinical care and innovative research focused on improving the lives of people with TBI, their families, and close others. The primary focus is on moderate to severe TBI, as patients are recruited from inpatient rehabilitation to participate in research; however, many TBIMS investigators are also interested in mild TBI, or concussion.

More than 15,000 individuals are currently enrolled in the National Database (NDB), managed by the TBIMS National Data and Statistical Center. Each TBIMS center collects and enters into the NDB an identical data set on each individual, capturing:

- ◆ Emergency & acute care information such as CT scan findings and depth/duration of loss or alteration of consciousness
- ◆ Status and progress during inpatient rehabilitation
- ◆ Pre-injury social and demographic data
- ◆ Findings from a battery of measures assessing functional, social, emotional, and medical outcomes at 1, 2, 5 years after the TBI and every 5 years thereafter. The TBIMS is unique in the scope of its longitudinal data on the outcomes of persons with complex mild/moderate/severe TBI.



NIDILRR funding also supports the following types of TBI research within TBIMS Centers:

- ◆ Data mining studies examining relationships among existing data elements in the NDB.
- ◆ Site-specific local research projects.

Join a Supportive Online Community for TBI Survivors and Families

The Comeback Project is a free, private online community for survivors of brain injury and their families to help you get your life back after a brain injury. You can join the community to share and get the support you need at: a-talented-mind.mightybell.com.

The community is provided by A Talented Mind Clinic in Richmond, Virginia, that provides cognitive rehabilitation therapy to brain injury survivors and families. For more information, you may also email Mike Cerreto at cerreto@atalentedmind.com.

SKILL-BUILDING, SUPPORTIVE AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR COUPLES AFTER BRAIN INJURY PARTICIPANTS INVITED!

Are you in a relationship? Have you or your partner had an acquired brain injury?

You May Qualify for an Ongoing Research Study!

Virginia Commonwealth University researchers in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation are seeking adults with brain injuries to be part of a research study. We are evaluating the helpfulness of an outpatient rehabilitation program to help couples adjust to brain injury. Qualified volunteers will participate in five to six support and education sessions. Study volunteers will be given information on brain injury, local resources, skills development, and positive coping strategies. Volunteers will also be asked to complete several questionnaires. Participants must be at least 18 years old. There is no charge for services and volunteers are compensated for their time.

If you are interested in participating, please call Jenny Marwitz at 804-828-3704 or toll free at 866-296-6904 or email jennifer.marwitz@vcuhealth.org

Has Your Balance Been Affected by a Concussion, Head or Brain Injury?

If so, You May Qualify for This Clinical Research Trial.

- Are you 18-65 years of age?
- Have experienced a concussion, head or brain injury, over 1 year ago?
- Have difficulty with balance?
- Did not lose consciousness for more than 24 hours when you were injured?

Compensation is available for qualified participants.

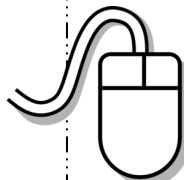
To learn more about this trial:

visit: **BrainInjuryTrial.com**

call: **1-877-844-4960**

Here are the answers to the word find on page 4. How did you do?

R	E	T	S	A	E	P	L	A	N	T	I	N	G	F
E	T	W	E	S	S	P	I	L	U	T	R	S	S	R
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I	A	F	I	G	R	N	N	G	L	I	N	R	H	V
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G	N	G	R	O	W	T	H	R	L	L	L	L	R	S
G	C	Y	C	L	A	M	E	N	S	A	L	I	L	P
T	L	E	M	W	O	N	S	S	S	A	R	G	L	A



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VCU, PM&R

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY MODEL SYSTEM

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Go to <http://model.tbinc.com> to subscribe by email and to access back issues!



Founded in 1983 by families and concerned professionals, the Brain Injury Association of Virginia is the only statewide non-profit organization in Virginia exclusively devoted to serving individuals with brain injury, their families, and those that care for and about them. Over 10,000 people find help from BIAV each year.

BIAV is a chartered state affiliate of the Brain Injury Association of America and exists to be the voice of brain injury through help, hope and healing for Virginians with brain injury and their families. We educate human service professionals and the community on the risks and impact of brain injury and advocate for improved medical and community-based services. Many of our staff members are Certified Brain Injury Specialists (CBIS Certified).

To find out more information about BIAV, contact us at 1-800-444-6443 or 804-355-5748. Or visit our website at www.biav.net.



The Voice of Brain Injury: *Help, Hope & Healing*