

# The Faces and Facts of Brain Injury

from the North Carolina Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Council



*When it happens to you, life may never be the same again. There is no cure for brain injury. It changes the course of your life.*

## What is a TBI?

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is an injury to the brain that is caused by an external physical force. It usually happens when the head hits something – a windshield during a car crash, the sidewalk during a fall, or the bullet from a gun. Shaking a baby can injure the brain.

*A traumatic brain injury can happen to anyone – and it does.*

- *My grandmother tripped and hit her head.*
- *My son flipped over on his ATV.*
- *My husband was in a terrible car crash.*
- *My brother was shot in the head.*
- *My wife was hit by a roadside bomb in Iraq.*

*Falls and motor vehicle crashes are the most common causes of TBI.*

## What happens to a person after a TBI?

Our brain controls how we think, move, feel and communicate. An injury to the brain can have devastating and lifelong effects. Some are visible; others are not. Every brain injury is different and so are the consequences. There can be physical changes including coma, headaches and seizures. There may be loss of muscle control, balance, weakness or paralysis. There may even be changes in vision, hearing and the sense of smell and taste. The person's speech and ability to read and

write may be affected. But by far the most difficult and troubling consequences for individuals and their families are changes in cognition - this is the ability to think and learn. Changes in behavior after a brain injury can range from depression, irritability, and impulsiveness to poor judgment, difficulty with problem solving and even altered personalities. A brain injury can have lifelong effects on children and adults.

## TBI is the hidden silent epidemic.

- One in 500 children is hospitalized with a brain injury each year.<sup>1</sup>
- Males are about 1.5 times as likely as females to have a TBI.<sup>2</sup>
- About 160,000 people in NC are living with long-term needs due to a traumatic brain injury.<sup>3</sup>

*My son, Jonathan, had a traumatic brain injury in a car accident 4 years ago at age 19. He had completed one year of college. Now he has cognitive, memory, and some physical deficits. He lives in a group home because he needs 24 hour supervision. He depends on Medicaid, Medicare and state mental health services.*

*Linda Herbert, mother*

<sup>1</sup> Siantz Tyler, J & M Mira. Traumatic Brain Injury in Children and Adolescents. Austin, TX: pro-ed, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Facts about Traumatic Brain Injury. Centers for Disease Control. Atlanta, GA, 2006.

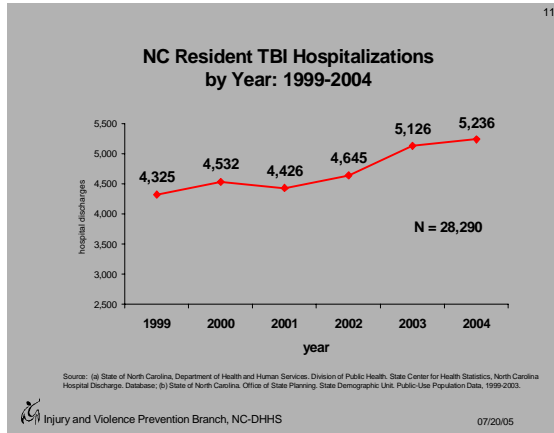
<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, GA.

## We must stop the rising numbers of deaths from TBI in NC

### *Facts you should know...*

- ✓ More people are dying from traumatic brain injuries now than in 1999.
- ✓ Five people died each day and 37 people every week due to TBI in 2004.
- ✓ Teenagers and adults in the prime of their lives, between ages 15 to 44, have the greatest numbers of deaths from TBI.
- ✓ Falls resulting in a TBI are the leading cause of death in persons who are elderly.
- ✓ Motor vehicle crashes and firearms are major causes of deaths in young and middle age adults.

## The costs of hospital care are high and going up - *Facts you should know*



\$ Over 5,000 hospitalizations for TBI just in 2004.

\$\$ Average cost per day of hospital care for a person with a TBI was over \$4,500.

\$\$\$ Fewer hospital days used since 1999, but the costs have gone up to a high of \$190 million.

*All statistics on Traumatic Brain Injury Deaths and Hospitalizations in North Carolina Residents for 1999-2004 are provided by the Injury and Violence Prevention Branch, NC-DHHS Division of Public Health.*

### *The cost of medical care is just the tip of the ice berg...*

A parent... I had to give up my job because my daughter needs full time care.

A survivor... I'm 32 years old and I can't work anymore – what am I supposed to do?

A husband... Our insurance covered her hospital care but that was just the beginning.

## What do the survivors of TBI and their families need?

Survivors of TBI and their families ask, “How will I live? How will we manage? How can I get my life back?” Funding is needed for...

- Prevention programs to reduce deaths due to TBI.
- Training and education for public and private programs providing direct care.
- Supports and respite for families that will enable survivors to live at home.
- Services in the community to help survivors be as independent as possible.
- Residential programs with expertise in TBI to avoid nursing home care.
- Crisis services for emergency evaluation and treatment.
- Improved vocational services for job training and placement.
- Recreational and social opportunities to prevent isolation.
- Day programs for adults at risk of institutional care.

*The Division of MH/DD/SAS is the designated lead agency for traumatic brain injury in North Carolina. By supporting increased funding for TBI services, you can make a difference in the lives of those who live with brain injury and their families every day.*

For more information regarding TBI services in North Carolina, contact Sandy Ellsworth, TBI Lead at the Division of MH/DD/SAS, TBI Program, at 919-715-2774 <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/mhddsas>. The Brain Injury Association of North Carolina is a statewide organization with information and support at 919-833-9634 and [www.bianc.net](http://www.bianc.net).