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Doctor's Journal

Head Injury - Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

A woman reported to my office with a history of head injury due to whip lash in an automobile accident. She was hospitalized for a mild concussion and released with a clean bill of health (after all, about 95% of concussions completely resolve). However, since the accident, she had noted changes in her ability to taste and smell food, balance while walking, and read. She also complained of headaches, difficulty with paying attention, remembering things, and jumbling up words while speaking. All of these symptoms are common amongst those suffering from Mild Traumatic Brain Injury. Additional symptoms may include changes in judgment, planning and reasoning, as well as in mood or personality. Changes in thinking skills (called cognitive difficulties) may impact a person's ability to return to work at full capacity. Both cognitive and personality changes can have a profound impact on family relationships. It can be particularly difficult for family members or friends to understand what it is like to have a brain injury, as a person looks fine on the outside. While some symptoms may resolve over time, others may be permanent. If you or someone you love has suffered a brain injury, there is much help available. There are brain injury associations in nearly every state that provide educational information to the public and they even fund some treatments. They know how to refer to local neuropsychologists (such as Dr. Kulberg), who can provide testing to assess for type of brain dysfunction and help patients learn how to compensate for memory deficits and other cognitive and emotional problems. In addition, there are wonderful books available to the public that help brain injured persons and their families cope (e.g., "Coping With Mild Traumatic Brain Injury" by Stoler and Hill; and "In an Instant" by Woodruff).