



AUTO ACCIDENT SURVIVOR'S GUIDE

for British Columbia

Navigating the medical-legal-insurance system

by Jill Franklin

Your only source for unbiased advice on ICBC injury claims and auto accident injuries including brain injuries.

Available online at www.autoaccidentsurvivorsguide.com

Brain injury programs in BC for people with mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI):

Note: Some programs below are primarily for people with moderate-to-severe brain injuries, but also accept people with mTBI.

WorkSafeBC's Brain Injury Program is being expanded throughout the province. It currently operates in the Lower Mainland. The focus is on early recognition of mTBI and early education. This may be coordinated with a graduated return-to-work program and begin as early as 2 weeks post-injury. A neuropsychological assessment may be done early on when symptoms continue. Specific treatment may be recommended when the person isn't ready to return to work. A patient's treating physician can make referrals to specialists through the Visiting Specialist Clinic (VSC) at WorkSafeBC. Assessment and treatment is done through community-based facilities throughout the Lower Mainland.

ICBC (Insurance Corporation of BC) doesn't have a dedicated brain-injury rehab program for people with mTBI, but some treatment may be covered under Part 7's. Once someone reports a mild traumatic brain injury to their adjuster, the family physician is contacted. ICBC will only accept a diagnosis of mTBI when a doctor provides objective evidence to support this: loss of consciousness, focal neurological deficits, an MRI report. ICBC may cover treatment recommended by the Fraser Health Concussion Clinic ([LINK TO BELOW](#)), ERBIS ([LINK TO BELOW](#)), or a service provider they routinely refer people to. ICBC's *Head Injury Department* handles all mTBI cases when this is the only injury sustained. No rehabilitation services are covered. The HID deals solely with the litigation of tort claims.

ERBIS (Early Response Brain Injury Service) (Vancouver Coastal Health/GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre, 604 714-4186) is an early intervention program for people with mTBI. When an mTBI diagnosis is made in the hospital, ERBIS should be informed. They'll then contact the patient. Physician referrals can also be made. Patient education, identifying risk factors, and suggesting coping strategies are usually done by phone. When mTBI symptoms significantly affect someone's life, or recovery may be prolonged, the person may meet with the ERBIS coordinator at GF Strong. A list of community or GFS therapists may be given to anyone requiring treatment (or to a third-party funder). The program coordinator may also consult with psychiatrists and others at GFS, or with other community resources, on a patient's behalf.

Community Brain Injury Program (VCH/GFS; 604 737-6335) accepts patients with ongoing problems. Self-referrals and referrals by physicians and family members are allowed. The person's needs are matched with contracted service providers and appropriate referrals made. Life skills coaching provided to someone with mTBI may include the teaching of memory aids and time management skills, and helping the person learn to organize and structure his life. Patients with Part 7 funding from ICBC are only accepted in the program when there's less than \$5,000 in their Part 7 account. While someone with an open tort claim can apply for the program, service provider costs may have to be repaid. Patients with severe CPCS may be referred to **Cheshire Homes Society** (604 540-0686; www.cheshirehomes.ca) or a similar facility that provides residential-rehab services to people with brain injuries.

Self-Management Program for Chronic Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (VCH/GFS; 604 734-1313, ext 2126) requires a physician referral. Patients must be at least 6 months post-injury. The goal of the 10-session program is to improve functional performance and increase performance satisfaction, not return the person to their pre-existing functioning level. The person is helped to accept himself as he is and given the skills to move on. Adaptive and compensatory strategies are taught and cognitive-behavioral approaches are used. All sessions except the first (which is done at GF Strong) and the last - which is done by phone - take place in the patient's home or work environment. People are encouraged to take part in the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (LINK TO BELOW) after completing this program.

The VCH / GF Strong Acquired Brain Injury Program (604 734-1313; www.vch.ca/gfstrong/programs/abi) sometimes accepts people with mTBI. They may suggest which GF Strong brain injury program is appropriate for you.

Fraser Health Concussion Clinic (604 933-2050) is a new early intervention program for people (16 years or older) in the Fraser Health region with mTBI. A goal of the program is to have every patient in Fraser Health with known or suspected mTBI referred to the clinic. This includes patients seen at any Fraser Health ER, local clinic, or physician's office. The program is based in Coquitlam but serves the entire Fraser Health region. Physician, hospital, third-party, community, and patient referrals are allowed, and there are no funding restrictions for the initial education and support done by phone. Ideally, patients should be referred to the clinic within 4 weeks of injury. While initial patient contact is by phone, patients are assessed and treated at the clinic as warranted. When long-term services are required, a patient may be referred to Fraser Health's Acquired Brain Injury Program.

Fraser Health Acquired Brain Injury Program (604 933-2050) is open to people with mTBI who have limited (or no) third-party funding. The program provides short-term rehab, neuropsychological assessments, and community support services. Self-referrals can be made, but a diagnosis of acquired brain injury must be physician-verified or medically documented.

Gorge Road Hospital Acquired Brain Injury Program (250 995-4700) is open to adults with mTBI who remain symptomatic 3 to 6 months (or more) post-injury. A psychiatrist determines what rehab treatment is provided.

Interior Health's Brain Injury Services (250 870-4662) tries to address the needs of people with mild traumatic brain injuries. An mTBI pilot program is expected to start soon and will be modeled on the early response programs at GF Strong and Fraser Health. **Vancouver Island Health Authority Brain Injury Program** (250 370-8455) **Northern Health Authority Acquired Brain Injury Program** (250 565-7473)

Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (University of Victoria-Centre on Aging, Head Office in Ladner, 866 902-3767; www.coag.uvic.ca/cdsmp/) runs a free 6-week patient education course (“Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions”) throughout the year at multiple locations in each health region. People with CPCS are welcome.

Community Brain Injury Program for Children and Youth (604/877 451-5511; www.cbip.bc.ca) provides publicly-funded rehab and support services to people under 19 who have had a brain injury in the past year and don't have third-party funding. When a referral is made more than 1 year post-injury (as often happens with mTBI), a neuropsychological assessment may be done and advice given on community resources.

Semiahmoo House Society's Acquired Brain Injury Program (604 535-2820) has a drop-in group in Newton and a day program in South Surrey (which requires Fraser Health referral). While people with mTBI may initially feel they don't fit in because their problems aren't severe enough, someone with little or no family support who isn't working (or whose doctor feels shouldn't be working) may find the life skills training and other services helpful. The person will also be directed to an appropriate support group.

Spectrum Society's Acquired Brain Injury Program (604 323-1433) is a community-based program funded by the Ministry of Health. Most referrals come from VCH or Fraser Health. Physicians can also refer patients with third-party funding or financial support from their families. A community support worker may be assigned to someone with CPCS who lives at home and needs help with safety issues or regaining independence.

ABI Outreach Services (604 603-7592) is a contracted service provider for the Community Brain Injury Program. Few physicians know about this; more should. While most of the people referred here are addicts, alcoholics, or homeless, anyone with CPCS who has trouble functioning in the world can be referred. Physician, family, community, and self-referrals are allowed. Services may involve locating housing and advocating with the BC Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance. While the program is based in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, it's open to people elsewhere as well. The program coordinator will travel to other locations in the Lower Mainland as needed. ABI Outreach has gotten many people with brain injuries off the streets and functioning again. Phone for referrals in other areas.

UBC Neuropsychiatry Clinic (604 822-7066) only sees patients with mTBI who are 6 or more months post-injury. No one involved in litigation is seen. While treatment is psychopharmacology-based, extensive psychotherapy may be provided when warranted. Some patients may be referred elsewhere for counseling.

Sunny Hill Hospital Brain Injury Team (604 453-8300) works predominately with children under 12 who have moderate-to-severe brain injuries. They sometimes provide support services for children with severe CPCS.

Hospital psychiatry departments often have staff with an interest in brain injury. They may know of neuro-psychiatrists with an interest in mTBI.

BC brain injury organizations have drop-in programs and offer a variety of services. They usually run (or can recommend) support groups, and can suggest local brain-injury-oriented health care providers.

Prince George Brain Injury Group Society (250 564-6928; www.pgbig.ca) is one of the most active, offering case management services, short- and long-term rehabilitation (on a fee-for-service basis), and support and educational programs. Their cognitive-based programs are geared to people with mTBI.

Bulkey Valley Brain Injury Association (250 877-7723; www.bvbia.ca) offers case management services, assistance with accessing rehabilitation programs, 1-on-1 emotional support, family support, and social and recreational activities.

Kamloops Brain Injury Association (250 372-1799) has many services and programs, including case coordination and life skills support. Their manual, "Brain Injury Services and Resources for Kamloops," includes the names of medical specialists who treat people with acquired brain injuries.

Coordinated Okanagan Brain Injury Services (Kelowna: 250 762-3233; Vernon: 250 307-6064; www.cobis.org) has a large staff of community support workers and offers case management services and a fee-for-service employment program.

South Okanagan Similkameen Brain Injury Society (250 490-0613; www.sosbis.com) offers case management services.

Fraser Valley Brain Injury Association (604/866-557-1913; www.fvbia.org) offers case management services and runs support groups throughout the Fraser Valley.

Lower Mainland Brain Injury Association (604 521-0833; www.lmbia.org) offers drop-in programs. Their web site has useful sections on everyday strategies and community resources.

Vancouver Island Head Injury Society (250 598-9339; www.biasvi.org) offers case management services.

Comox Valley Head Injury Society (250 334-9225) primarily runs support groups.
Nanaimo Brain Injury Society (250 753-5600; www.nbis.ca) offers rehabilitation and case management services, disability benefits assistance, and workshops focusing on issues ranging from trauma recovery to life skills strategies and anger management

(See also Jill Franklin's article on mild brain injury in the *BC Medical Journal*, December 2006)

If you know about other brain injury programs that should be on this list, please contact us at info@stonemountainbooks.com. Thank you.