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Self-Awareness of Changes during Recovery from Traumatic Brain Injury: Acknowledging One’s Functional Weaknesses

Objective: The present study examined self-awareness of functioning during recovery from traumatic brain injury (TBI) in relation to an individual’s cognitive, emotional, and physical functioning, quality of life, and motivation for treatment. Method: Fourteen individuals with moderate-severe TBI (8M/6F, mean age = 36, post-injury 4 years) rated their functional levels in somatization, motor, attention/memory, communication, depression, and aggression (Neurobehavioral Functioning Inventory [NFI]). They rated their satisfaction with current and future functioning in these areas, and also completed the Quality of Life (QOL) Inventory and Motivation for Treatment Questionnaire (MOTQ). Results: NFI results were within the average range. The patients’ overall QOL was average (T = 47), with responses ranging from Very Low to High. Lack of denial as measured by the MOTQ, or increased self-awareness of recovery (SAR), was evident for individuals endorsing current problems with motor functions (r = .78) and depression (r = .81), as well as their prediction of future problems with aggression (r = .72). Patients’ SAR inversely related to their quality of life regarding cognition (r = -.73). In terms of productive outlook, patients’ SAR directly related to their quality of life at home (r = .82) and motivation for rehabilitation (r = .76). Conclusion(s): Findings underscore the therapeutic importance of patient insight following TBI. Higher SAR by patients related to greater satisfaction with their home life. Results emphasize the importance of working with patients, together with their families, with the goals of acknowledging and accepting salient losses, and appreciating gains, during recovery from TBI.