

"You concentrate on the legal, we'll do the medical, together we'll have a solid case"

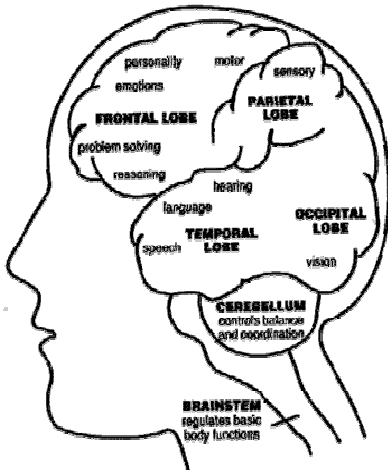
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Life Care Plan? Does This Injury Warrant One?

By Anne Kochuyt, BSN, RN, CLNC, MSCC

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is a diagnosis we see related to catastrophic injury cases, but it is not alone. Other catastrophic injuries frequently seen include: Spinal Cord Injury, Amputations, Burns, and Injured infants. In regards to a TBI case it is important to remember that the brain is very complex and depending on the area of the brain that is injured, either directly or indirectly, many different facets of a person's being can be and are affected.

The cognitive difficulties experienced after TBI, often have the most impact on recovery and outcome, even over their physical limitations. Most people with a brain injury, including those that are severe in degree, are ambulating after their trauma. Within a year 90% of them are getting around independently and able to care for themselves. It is the cognitive difficulties and behavioral problems that have the most significant impact, in terms of their independence. (<http://www.neuroskills.com>).



In addition to TBI, Spinal Cord Injuries (SCI) are at the top of the list when considering catastrophic injuries. An SCI occurs when a traumatic event results in damage to cells within the spinal cord or severs the nerve tracts that relay signals up and down the spinal cord. These injuries occur in approximately 12-15,000 people per year in the U.S, with about 10,000 of these people becoming permanently paralyzed, and many of the rest dying as a result of their injuries. Most spinal cord trauma occurs to young, healthy males, 15-35 years of age.

The effects of the SCI depend on the type and the level of the injury. SCI can be divided into two types of injury —complete and incomplete. A complete injury means there is no function below the level of the injury; no sensation and no voluntary movement. Both sides of the body are equally affected. Incomplete injury means that there is some functioning below the primary level of the injury. A person with an incomplete injury may be able to move one limb more than another, may be able to feel parts of the body that cannot be moved, or may have more functioning on one side of the body than the other.

It is often difficult to foresee the amount of money that it will take to cover the needs of a person with such an injury, for the rest of their life. The Life Care Planner is a trained individual with experience in evaluation and forecasting the future needs and potential complications of a person in just such a situation. These professionals assist the attorney to ensure that the client will be well represented related to their human needs and the dollar value associated with those needs.

Obviously Not All Injuries Are Catastrophic

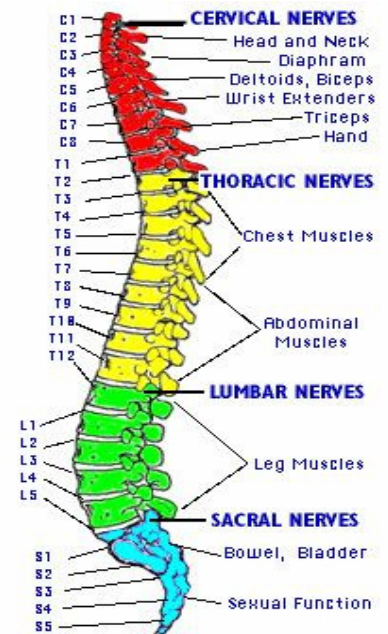
We may not consider all injuries in the catastrophic category, however, even the somewhat minor MVA injuries can qualify for a Life Care Plan to be beneficial. Granted not every case warrants this in-depth look at future costs, related to the injury. Some ask "Can't I just obtain the information from the physician for costs related to this injury?" The answer, "Yes, you can!" However, sometimes there are multiple care providers, or should be, and often there is much more to take into consideration than just the medical costs related to what that physician will do. For example: A healthy 35 year old man, was in an auto accident that resulted in the need of a hip replacement. This injury might not seem significant enough to warrant a Life Care Plan. However, receiving costs from the physician for this patient were estimated at approximately \$23,500, whereas the actual projected future medical care costs were well over \$200,000.



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Life Care Plan? (cont.)

Another case example: a child was hit by a car while riding a bicycle. He sustained a bladder and urethral injury, amongst others. He will require intermittent catheterization for the rest of his life. In this instance we also need to take into consideration his age, cost of medical supplies related to catheterization, possibility of urinary tract infections, medication to assist with bladder elimination and his needs as he gets older related to this injury i.e. psychological counseling related to the probable inability to have sexual intercourse, options of having a child, etc.

We most typically consider the physical aspects of a person's injury, but the psychological well being of an individual is often affected as well. One of our clients was in a car accident, pulling out of a parking lot. The client received a whiplash injury, a head laceration, concussion, and a broken leg. Physically they were back to their pre-injury state in about 6 months, mentally they still have difficulties, 4 years later. Nightmares related to the accident are still an issue, they are unable to drive, which causes extreme stress for their family and anxiety attacks are a frequent problem. All of these situations affect the family, their job, and their self esteem. These were issues that were not taken into consideration initially when preparing for future services and costs they would need related to this event.

We must look at all areas of a person's life that may be effected by an injury. Costs for future surgeries, therapies, hospitalizations, testing, home assistance, medical equipment, medications, and lost wages, would not likely be included in the primary physicians forecast.

This is a brief look into injuries, catastrophic and otherwise and the consideration that should be given to future needs of your client.

For more information on building a strong case or insights into Life Care Planning, contact [Med - Law Connection, Inc.](#)

Areas included within a Life Care Plan

- Future Medical Care - Routine, Surgical intervention or aggressive treatment plan
- Medication Needs
- Supplies
- Mobility Aids
- Diagnostic Testing/Educational Assessment
- Projection Evaluations
- Projected Therapeutic Modalities
- Home Furnishings and Accessories
- Architectural Renovations/Housing Options
- Leisure Time and/or Recreational Equipment
- Potential Complications
- Home Care/Institutional Care

The Joint Commission Announces 2009 National Patient Safety Goals

The Joint Commission (TJC) has announced the 2009 Patient Safety Goals and related requirements for each of its accreditation programs and its Disease Specific Care Certification Program.

Major changes for 2009 include three new hospital and critical access hospital requirements related to preventing deadly health care-associated infections due to multiple drug-resistant organisms, central line-associated bloodstream infections and surgical site infections. These additions build on existing National Patient Safety Goals to reduce the risk of health care associated infections, and recognize that patients continue to acquire preventable infections at an alarming rate within hospitals.

For more information on the Joint Commission National Patient Safety Goals go to www.jointcommission.org



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