

Summer is prime time for serious head injuries

An estimated one million children in this country sustain a traumatic brain injury each year. Every 21 seconds, a head injury occurs in the U.S. The majority of these are mild closed head injuries, also called concussions.

A concussion is a head injury in which the skull has not been broken. The brain can be injured from the inside by banging and bouncing against skull walls. Sudden movement within the skull can cause bruising, tiny tissue tears, swelling, and chemical changes. Very often, x-rays will not detect the damage. However, the impact on a child's functioning can be drastic.

It was previously thought that the head had to hit something for there to be a concussion-like

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injury. This myth has been proven wrong during recent years. A whiplash-like motion of the head back and forth can cause damage. A loss of consciousness is not necessary for the brain to be injured and this myth has been repeatedly disproven in research and clinical studies. Actually, any disruption in consciousness no matter how brief, such as mildly dazed, constitutes concussion. And repeated concussions can have a cumulative effect as often seen in boxing. Even more dramatically, it takes only three seconds to permanently damage a child's brain as in the so-called shaken baby syndrome.

Common after-effects of significant concussion injuries to children can include: problems with attention and concentration, with memory and learning, frustration, irritability and anxiety. These may not show up immediately after injury but may develop as weeks and months pass and chemical changes that take place inside the brain become more pronounced.

It can be a good idea to have a child who has experienced a head injury to be examined by a neuropsychologist. He would conduct tests that measure memory, intelligence, verbal and non-verbal reasoning, perception, motor skills and emotional functioning.

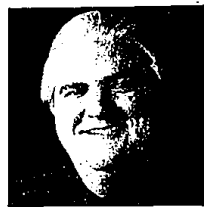
Then the neuropsychologist would consult with the school

and might work in conjunction with a rehabilitation specialist to develop a treatment plan. Special education laws now include programs for traumatically brain injured children. Treatment could consist of individualized cognitive exercises, memory retraining, and psychological therapy for emotional trauma often acquired in accidents. After accidents from motor vehicle collisions, assaults, falls and sports related concussions, there may also develop post traumatic stress reactions, commonly seen after a sudden traumatic experience.

More resources than ever are now available for children, parents and teachers to learn about these conditions and ways to remedy the consequences of such

injuries. In addition to the natural process of brain healing, the likelihood of recovery or adjustment to closed head injuries can be increased by working with rehabilitation specialists.

We need to devote attention to prevention. It's estimated that 90 percent of closed head injuries and concussions could be prevented if people took more precautions. This means consistently using seat belts, protective helmets in sports, while riding bikes, scooters and roller blades. Additional prevention to keep in mind is to firmly anchor climbing gymnasium equipment and to know the depth of water before diving into pools. In the final analysis the greatest tool we have against traumatic brain injury is prevention.



Len McCulloch

Leonard McCulloch is a certified brain injury specialist and board certified in trauma. He is on staff at Broe Rehabilitation Services in Farmington Hills. He can be reached at 474-2763.

July 12 benefit helps low income moms with child care costs

The Women's Caring Program, a nonprofit network of Michigan women dedicated to helping children from low income families, will host its 22nd annual Twi-

light Gathering garden party fund-raiser from 6:30-8 p.m. on Thursday, July 12, at Meadow View in Milford.

Proceeds from the event and a

silent auction held that evening benefit the Child Care Commitment, a program offering low income families subsidies for one year of child care in a day-care

facility. Last year's event raised more than \$100,000.

"This began simply as a way to catch up with old friends and meet new ones," said Carol Walters, WCP founder. "The first few years, we all brought a dish to pass and a new friend to introduce to the group. For some women, it became a chance to catch up, laugh - whatever - with old friends. It wasn't long

before I had 300 women at my house and too much food. That's when we decided to start catering the event and start raising money for a good cause."

The volunteer WCP board of women run the event, from designing an invitation and developing a menu to organizing a silent auction and assembling floral arrangements.

Every year since then, Wal-

ter's home and vast gardens are transformed into a festive scene of tents, tables set with elegant displays of fresh flowers, gourmet food, live music and a silent auction.

Tickets to the event are \$75 and corporate and individual sponsorships are available. For more information, call Melissa Cragg at (313) 822-4743.

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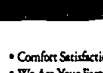
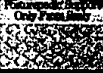
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