May 2012 MSKTC Headlines

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===== Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) =====

The University of Pittsburgh Model Center on Spinal Cord Injury (UPMC-SCI) Publishes Study Showing an Increasing Rate of Wheelchair Breakdowns

A new study—“Increases in Wheelchair Breakdowns, Repairs, and Adverse Consequences for People with Traumatic Spinal Cord Injury”—published in the American Journal of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation describes an increasing rate of wheelchair breakdowns in the SCI population. Michael L. Boninger, MD, led the study team from the University of Pittsburgh Model Center on Spinal Cord Injury. Per six-month period between 2006-2011, about 53 percent of the study population reported wheelchair breakdowns; this is an increase from 45 percent per six-month period between 2004-2006. The average number of repairs per person and the rate of adverse consequences from breakdowns also increased over the same time span. These results carry important medical and policy implications, which are discussed.

The study was featured in several media outlets, including HealthDay and Essential Public Radio.

WSB-TV, an ABC Affiliate, Highlights the Southeastern Regional SCIMS Program at Shepherd Center’s SHARE Military Initiative

In a video report, WSB-TV, the Atlanta, GA-based affiliate of ABC, featured the SHARE Military Initiative of the Southeastern Regional SCIMS Program at Shepherd Center. The story concerns Kyle Schweers, a U.S. Navy corpsman who sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI) while deployed to Afghanistan. Kyle received care through the SHARE Military Initiative, which offers a comprehensive and specialized rehabilitation program for returning servicemembers with TBI or posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Since receiving care at Shepherd, Kyle reports feeling “100 percent” better.

The story also covered U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson’s visit to the Shepherd Center. Senator Isakson, who serves on the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, met with servicemembers and staff at the Southeastern Regional SCIMS Program at Shepherd Center earlier this month.

===== Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) =====

WJLA, an ABC Affiliate, Highlights the Virginia Commonwealth Traumatic Brain Injury Model System’s Work on Relationships After Brain Injury
The Virginia Commonwealth Traumatic Brain Injury Model System (VCU-TBIMS) has featured the innovative work of a research team regarding couples’ relationships after brain injury. Jeffrey S. Kreutzer, Ph.D., headed the team. The story concerns Kurt Olsen and his wife Jennifer Olsen, who suffered a severe traumatic brain injury after a car accident in 2009. Dr. Kreutzer and his team at VCU offer novel evidence-based counseling methods specifically tailored for couples like the Olsens who are affected by TBI.

Earlier this year, The New York Times also featured VCU-TBIMS’ work on post-TBI relationships.


The Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society (JINS) recently published a special virtual issue covering mild traumatic brain injuries (mTBIs) and PTSD. The issue, titled “Complexities of Mild Traumatic Brain Injury and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder,” synthesizes previously published JINS articles and is particularly relevant to servicemembers returning from warzones. Sureyya Dikmen, Ph.D., of the University of Washington Traumatic Brain Injury Model System, coedited this issue with Jennifer Vasterling, Ph.D., of the VA Boston Healthcare System.

Model Systems Researchers Will Participate in the Upcoming Phoenix Society’s 24th Annual World Burn Conference

James A. Fauerbach, Ph.D., of the Johns Hopkins University Burn Injury Rehabilitation Model System, and Radha Holavanahalli, Ph.D., of UT Southwestern’s North Texas Burn Rehabilitation Model System, will participate in the Phoenix Society’s 2012 World Burn Conference. Both are members of the Aftercare and Reintegration Committee, a joint committee of the American Burn Association and the Phoenix Society, which will meet during the World Burn Conference.

The World Burn Conference provides a forum for participants from around the world to share stories, provide support, and promote knowledge of recovery processes. The event will appeal to survivors of burn injury, their caregivers, healthcare professionals, researchers, and firefighters. The conference will convene at the Frontier Airlines Center in Milwaukee, WI, from September 12–15.

Consumer Factsheet Discussing Psychological Distress After Burn Injury Available From the Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center

A consumer factsheet—“Psychological Distress after Burn Injury”—that discusses the causes, effects, and treatments for post-burn injury psychological distress is available from the MSKTC. James A. Fauerbach, Ph.D., and Shawn T. Mason, Ph.D., both of the Johns Hopkins University
**Burn Injury Rehabilitation Model System**, in collaboration with the Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center, developed the factsheet.