



Brain-e-News

SPRING 2023

RESOURCES

MOSS REHABILITATION
RESEARCH INSTITUTE
www.mrrl.org

MOSSREHAB RESOURCE NET
www.mossresourcenet.org

THE CENTER FOR OUTCOME
MEASUREMENT IN BRAIN
INJURY
www.tblms.org/combl

BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION
OF AMERICA
WWW.BIAUSA.ORG

BRAIN INJURY RESOURCE LINE
1-800-444-6443

BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION OF
PENNSYLVANIA
www.blapa.org
1-866-635-7097

BRAIN INJURY ALLIANCE OF
NEW JERSEY
www.blanj.org
1-732-745-0200
FAMILY HELPLINE
1-800-669-4323

BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION OF
DELAWARE
www.blausa.org/Delaware/bla.htm
1-800-411-0505

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH BRAIN INJURY
HELPLINE
1-866-412-4755
TTY **1-877-232-7640**

MODEL SYSTEM KNOWLEDGE
TRANSLATION CENTER (MSKTC)
www.msktc.org

www.Brainline.org

New Research Highlights the Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on People with Brain Injury

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted daily life for nearly everyone, and its effects are still being felt today. Local and national efforts to restrict movement and reduce the spread of disease by limiting social contact interfered with many of our usual opportunities to participate in society. MRRi scientists [Umesh Venkatesan, PhD](#), and

[Amanda Rabinowitz, PhD](#) were interested in looking at how individuals with traumatic brain injury (TBI), who already face challenges participating in community activities because of their disability, fared during this period.

Collaborating with a team of investigators from the National TBI Model Systems (TBIMS), Dr. Venkatesan led a study of the effects of the pandemic on societal participation in data from TBIMS enrollees nationwide. Societal participation was self-reported over telephone, and covered three domains: productive activity (e.g., employment, household chores), social activity (e.g., spending time with friends and family), and community involvement (e.g., dining out). The study included 7,000 individuals who either reported their participation level in the five years before the pandemic started (before March 2020) or during roughly the first year of the pandemic.

The study findings, [recently published in *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*](#), show that social participation and productivity were similar during the pandemic as compared to the five years prior. However, community involvement saw a modest, but significant, decrease among people with TBI during the pandemic. The impact on community involvement is unsurprising, considering that pandemic-related lockdowns—i.e. closures of restaurants, movie theaters, and other activities outside of the home—reduced opportunities for community involvement for all people, including those with TBI. Our findings suggest that, despite reduced community involvement, persons with TBI continued to find opportunities to be and to stay socially connected (e.g., virtually) similarly to pre-pandemic levels. It is yet to be determined whether reductions in community involvement will affect long-term mental health and overall TBI rehabilitation progress.

(continued on page 2)

COVID-19 Impacts (con't from page 1)

The study findings are a starting point for a series of studies examining the pandemic's effects on the lives of people with TBI. In fact, [a companion study](#) with which Drs. Venkatesan and Rabinowitz were also involved, examined mental health symptoms among people with TBI before and during the pandemic. Somewhat surprisingly, this study found relatively little impact on mental health in the sample overall. Further research is warranted to examine the mental and physical health impacts of COVID-19 in subgroups of people living with chronic moderate to severe TBI. Over time, TBIMS researchers will be able to gather and analyze data from before to during *and* after the pandemic, and from the same individuals at different points in their recovery, providing a more complete picture of health trajectories throughout the course of this remarkable time in our history.

Moss Collaborates with other TBI Model Systems Sites

Every TBI-Model-System cycle, each funded center proposes a multi-center research project to further understanding of TBI outcomes and treatments. In the current cycle, Moss is enthusiastic to collaborate with our Model Systems colleagues on 3 exciting projects. Mt. Sinai is leading a study designed to characterize the impact of early life adversity and neighborhood environment on outcomes after TBI. Dr. Umesh Venkatesan, who brings expertise in studying adverse childhood experiences in persons living with TBI, will be leading the research activities related to this project at Moss. Moss is also participating in a study led by TIRR that will examine peoples' health perceptions and beliefs with the goal of developing multidimensional profiles that can be used to personalize patient-provider communication. Dr. Amanda Rabinowitz, Project Director of the Moss TBI Model System will be overseeing Moss's involvement in this project. Lastly, Dr. John Whyte is participating in an Ohio State University led module study to examine the impact of participation in state-provided programs on outcomes after TBI. This study builds on prior research from the TBI Model Systems demonstrating that merely living in a state that provided more state-level resources for persons with TBI had a small, but significant, impact on patient outcomes. Moss has a strong track record of productive collaborations with the other Model Systems centers, and we look forward to our collaborations in the 2022-2027 cycle!

EMPOWERMENT GROUP



The Elkins Park Empowerment Group meets on the second Monday of each month from 5-6:30 virtually.

Please contact Debbi Eisen at Debra.Eisen@jefferson.edu

Two Faces of the Model System

Lauren Krasucki

The TBI lab is pleased to welcome our new Lab Manager, Lauren Krasucki! Lauren joined us in February of this year. She received her bachelor's degree in Exercise Science and her Doctor of Physical Therapy from the University of Scranton. She is also a recent graduate of Florida International University, earning her Master's degree in Public Health and a Certificate in Epidemiology. Lauren has worked as a physical therapist in a variety of clinical settings, including home-based programs, short-term rehabilitation, and long-term care. Most recently, she served as the Professional Education Coordinator for the Parkinson's Foundation.

Lauren will oversee many of the day-to-day operations of our current studies, help prepare upcoming projects, and provide mentorship to our research assistants. She is excited for the opportunity to help improve the quality of life for the large group of people involved in MRRI's research – a change from the individual care she has provided as a physical therapist. When she is not working, Lauren enjoys reading, cooking, and spending time with her dog. Welcome, Lauren!



Emma Stern



The TBI lab is happy to introduce our newest Research Assistant, Emma Stern, who joined us in November 2022. Emma graduated from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2022, receiving her bachelor's degree in psychology on the neuroscience track, with a specialized focus on human disability services. As an undergraduate, she was involved in behavioral neuroscience research, teaching mice to use touch-screen technology. Before coming to MRRI, she worked as a mental health counselor for people with schizophrenia. She also worked at the Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center in Colorado, providing adaptive outdoor experiences to those with physical and/or mental disabilities. So far, Emma most enjoys the face-to-face interactions with patients. She appreciates getting to be the first person to introduce new patients to our research studies and other resources. In her free time, Emma loves the outdoors, hiking, and spending time with her dog. Welcome to the team, Emma!

MossRehab at Elkins Park Hospital
50 E. Township Line Road
Elkins Park, PA 19027
ATTN: Lauren McLaughlin



The Moss TBI Model System

The National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research has designated MossRehab as a Model System for traumatic brain injury since 1997. The TBI Model System program seeks to improve lives by creating and disseminating new knowledge about the course, treatment and outcomes of TBI.

**The Traumatic
Brain Injury
Model System
(TBIMS) Centers
for the current
funding cycle
(2022-2027)**

Current Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems

