



TBI TODAY

News, Ideas, and Resources from the Virginia TBI Model System

THE VIRGINIA TBIMS TEAM

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Positive Research Findings: The Brain Injury Family Intervention

After brain injury, family members and survivors face many new and difficult challenges. For example, many people have trouble understanding the effects of injury, managing stress, setting reachable goals, and solving problems effectively. To help family members and survivors face challenges more successfully, clinical researchers at Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center have developed a special program, the Brain Injury Family Intervention (BIFI).

The BIFI program was designed to give adult survivors and families the tools they need to help them recover. Trained counselors meet with each family, including the survivor, every other week for ten weeks. During each meeting, topics are discussed along with strategies for solving problems. Family members are also given educational materials they can review at home and share with other family and friends. Discussion topics include living with personality changes and other difficulties, how brain injury affects family members' lives, and understanding emotional and physical recovery. Topics also include coping with loss and change, understanding and managing intense emotions, and important things families can do to extend the natural recovery process.

To help understand how the program is helping, VCU researchers

ask each family member a series of questions at the end of each meeting.

Families are asked to say whether the session was helpful, whether they felt they met the goals for the session, and the most important thing they learned. VCU researchers have looked at the responses to these questions, and their findings will be published in an upcoming issue of the international journal, *NeuroRehabilitation*.

Overall, the researchers found that most family members and survivors rated the program as very helpful. Meetings that covered stress management and strategies for optimal recovery were among the highest rated. Family members' goal attainment ratings were also very high with 80% or more rating the goals for each meeting as having been met. Finally, when families were asked at the end of the program whether or not they would recommend the Brain Injury Family Intervention to others, the overwhelming response was, "Yes."

The Brain Injury Family Intervention is an on-going project. If your family is interested in participating or if you would like to learn more about the project, please contact Dr. Emilie Godwin at (804) 828-3701 or toll free at (866) 296-6904. You can also email eegodwin@vcu.edu.