

September 28, 2010

TESTIMONY TO LONG TERM CARE INTERIM COMMITTEE

HON. GARY KREIDT, CHAIRMAN

In the head injury community, we have five general goal areas toward which we are constantly working, and which serve as pillars for our efforts. We do not expect the legislature to do everything for us related to these targets, but we do solicit your help whenever and wherever appropriate.

1. **AWARENESS:** Head injuries (traumatic brain injuries) could be easily regarded as an epidemic. Yet, while many people realize the existence of the problem, most are not really aware of the extent nor the intensity of the situation. Unless a person has had a first-hand experience with a head injury, it is very difficult to emphasize with what happens. Making the general public aware of head injuries and the resulting impact upon individual and family lives must be a major thrust.
2. **INFORMATION:** Despite the frequency of head injuries, the information is difficult to accumulate and organize. The nature of the human brain is such that each case is totally unique. It is impossible to generalize about traumatic brain injuries. Nevertheless, there is emerging a body of some knowledge that must be codified and presented to the public, especially to those undergoing a TBI experience first-hand.
3. **TRAINING:** The number of people necessary to provide services is staggering. It is virtually impossible to pay for all the required time. Therefore, a huge cadre of volunteers must be recruited and trained to be available for assisting those suffering head injuries. This training responsibility is a major portion of the Head Injury Association's mission. Well-intended persons without proper preparation may do more harm than good in an encounter.
4. **SUPPORT:** From the instant a head injury happens, it is important to have human contact and support. Since there are so many unknowns involved in head injuries, currently, the best "medication" that can be applied is human intervention and support. This support will hopefully come from the individuals surfaced and trained as described in No. 3 above.
5. **PREVENTION:** Head injuries are indeed tragic, and equally tragic is the fact that many of them could have been prevented. Much effort must be expended to have citizens exercise the appropriate behavior, precaution, protection, and prevention. Many head injuries could be prevented "If only -----."

The head Injury Association of North Dakota is a small operation with only one employee. We need to place qualified and capable persons throughout the state to work with and coordinate the volunteer program we are developing.

All five of the goal areas mentioned are important. It is not possible to prioritize them and concentrate on one or two. All five must be brought along in an ongoing fashion.

We are available by phone on a 24/7 basis through a WATS line in the home of the executive director. Please call if you want additional information about this major problem and what is being done about it.

Respectfully submitted,



Richard D. Ott, Executive Director

Head Injury Association of North Dakota

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