

Long-Term Effects of Acquired Brain Injury

When it comes to personal injury, head injuries are becoming increasingly common. They can happen in any situation, from a slip and fall on an icy step, to a hard hit at an athletic event, to a car or motorcycle collision.

Head injuries are the most common cause of death and permanent disability around the world. Over one million Canadians are currently living with the effects a brain injury and around 160,000 Canadians will acquire a serious brain injury this year.

Mild brain injury from head trauma is being researched and reported on more often, in the news. This type of wound may result in a concussion with temporary vision issues, nausea, and headaches among their symptoms. Most of these injuries will heal on their own, with time and rest, but some will result in milder long-term effects.

Some acquired brain injury can be much more severe. One serious injury can cost the health care system up to \$1, 000, 000, at the time of injury alone. Of course, the life-long effects that can be devastating for individuals and their families:

1. Lengthy Hospitalization

Many individuals who acquire brain injuries remain in the hospital for weeks or even months after the injury. Sometimes, they are transferred to rehabilitation facilities while they relearn basic skills. Even if their healthcare is funded, families can incur great expense for food, transportation and accommodation during the recovery period.

2. Ongoing Medical Care

Many people will continue to need medication and regular follow-up visits after their injury. Some will require ongoing physiotherapy, occupational therapy, counselling or other services.

3. Pain and Suffering

It is possible that headaches, fatigue, dizziness, seizures, and other symptoms will continue indefinitely, as patients begin to live with their new normal, after the accident.

4. Permanent Physical Disability

People who are left with physical disabilities, after a brain injury, may be unable to walk, talk or care for their own physical needs. They may require a wheelchair or other specialized equipment, modifications to their home or vehicle, and may even need to hire full-time caregivers.

5. Permanent Cognitive Disability

Brain function can be affected permanently, and patients may end up with poor memory, difficulty processing information, inability to concentrate and attention deficits. They may experience impaired communication, reasoning ability and judgement. They may be unable to process sensory information and have a hard time dealing with certain sounds, lighting and physical touch. They may even experience differences in the way they taste and smell.

6. Personality Differences

While many seem to recover physically, patients are often left with mood swings, agitation, aggressive behaviour and difficulty expressing emotions. They can be more self-centred and insensitive to the feelings of others, and they may deal with anxiety, depression and obsessive-compulsive behaviours they didn't have before the injury. They may be unable to participate in social events and these less visible symptoms may greatly impact relationships and family dynamics

7. Loss of Income

Many people never fully recover from a brain injury. They may be unable to return to work or may return to a role with less responsibility than they previously held, resulting in a permanent loss or reduction of income.

Law suits related to brain injury can be complicated. They may take many months or years to settle and each case will need to be handled differently, depending how the injury was acquired. A personal injury lawyer can help an individual and their family sort through the confusion, determine their future requirements and secure the benefits they need to recover and manage expenses after their injury.