Research Matters

Title: Long-term school outcomes of children and adolescents with traumatic brain injury

After TBI, students may have cognitive problems that negatively affect their school performance in subjects like math, reading, and written language. Although most children improve for up to 12 months after their injury, many continue to have difficulties years later. This study was the first to look at the child's age at injury, severity of injury, and time since the injury to evaluate the short and long-term need for school support services and academic performance and the use of academic skills according to parents.

Children were recruited from hospitals and local community establishments. Children were divided into four groups; two TBI groups, (1) complicated-mild/moderate (*23 children*), (2) severe (*56 children*), and two non-TBI comparison groups, (3) orthopedic (*28 children*), and (4) healthy (*42 children).*

Key findings:

- Children with TBI were more likely to receive school support services compared to children without TBI.
- Children with complicated-mild/moderate TBI were less likely than those with more severe injury to receive school services two years after their injury.
- At six years after injury children with complicated-mild/moderate TBI were just as likely to receive school services as children with severe TBI.
- A similar pattern was found with academic performance and use of academic skills according to parents.

Implications:

There is a critical need for long-term progress monitoring of student's academic performance to ensure all students along the entire TBI spectrum receive the educational supports they need in a timely manner. Progress monitoring of this nature also allows educators to adjust their instruction to meet the needs of students with TBI.

Reference:

Prasad, M. R., Swank, P. R., & Ewing-Cobbs, L. (2017). Long-term school outcomes of children and adolescents with traumatic brain injury. *The Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation, 32*(1), E24-E32. doi:10.1097/htr.0000000000000218

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