

Brain Disorders and Therapeutics

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The role of the hidden markers (Depression, Sexual Dysfunction and Personality Change) in Traumatic Brain Injury

Many professionals especially Clinical- and Neuro-Psychologists when doing a medico-legal evaluation for purposes of medical negligence or compensation in Traumatic Brain Injury tend to focus only on the neurocognitive fall outs as a result of the injury and how this would impact on the ability of the patient to carry on with an occupation and quality of life. It is the experience of the presenter that the personality functioning-, emotional-functioning and sexual functioning is equally important to be focused on during a comprehensive medico-legal evaluation for the following reasons:

(a) Research indicates that injury to the brain can cause personality disorder. Rucco (2009) found that damage to the frontal and temporal cortex, diffuse axonal injury and disruptive neurotransmitter systems can cause personality disorders and other psychiatric disorders. Nichol as early as 2009 also stated that damage to the medial frontal area of the brain can cause personality disorders while damage to the limbic system, orbitofrontal cortex and left anteromedial frontal lobe can cause aggressive disorders. Personality disorders and psychiatric problems impact directly on the functioning of a person in the work situation and their quality of life. If psychiatric problems, personality problems or aggressive disorders are found which was not applicable prior to the injury this can directly validate a Traumatic Brain Injury.

(b) A Traumatic Brain Injury can directly impact on the sexual functioning of the patient – either causing inhibition or causing disinhibition. This then also impacts directly on the work performance of the patient as it impacts on his or her personal life.

During the presentation some strategies for measuring personality functioning- emotional functioning- and sexual functioning as hidden markers for Traumatic Brain Injury will be discussed.

Speaker Biography

Louise Olivier is a registered Clinical- and Counselling Psychologist. She has been President of the Psychological Society of South Africa twice. She is at present Chairperson of the Division for Neuropsychology and Forensic Psychology of the Psychological Society of South Africa. She has also been elected to the Professional Board of Psychology of the Health Professions Council and has been a council member for many years. As such she was on the committee of the Health Professions Council of South Africa to determine the criteria for the registration of Neuropsychologists. She has written several books in collaboration with colleagues all over the world regarding forensic psychology and the importance of neuropsychology in forensic work. She has been invited as key note speaker for several conferences in the United States, Australia, and several other countries. She does extensive work both therapeutically and for forensic purposes with Traumatic Brain Injury patients.

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