

2024 Brain Injury Conference
The Journey – Finding Your Way After Brain Injury
June 14th, 2024

7:30am -8:00am
Exhibitor set-up

8:00am – 8:45am
Registration and Exhibits

8:45am - 9:00am
Welcome

9:00am – 10:00am
You, me and burn-out makes three: A realistic conversation about accessing care in a system on fire
Presented by: Stacie Dertinger and Jane Savage

10:00am – 10:30am
Navigating our unique recovery journey and finding purpose - A mother's recovery story
Presented by: Cynthia Aguiar

10:30am -10:45am
Break and Exhibits

10:45am – 11:45am
Sex and Gender Differences In Brain Injury and Why It Matters
Presented by: Katherine Price Snedaker

11:45am – 12:15pm
Fighting Inflammation: Brain Boosting Foods for Brain Health
Presented by: Cailee Heggstad

12:15pm – 1:00pm
Lunch and Exhibits

1:00pm – 1:30pm
Accessing Income Supports for Brain Injury Survivors
Presented by: Greg Willson

1:30pm – 2:30pm
Life After Stroke: Navigating Challenges and Embracing Triumphs
Presented by: Dr. Siva Murugappan and Dr. Prema Samy

2:30pm – 2:45pm
Movement Brain Break
Presented by: Cynthia Aguiar

2:45pm – 2:55pm
Break and Exhibits

2:55pm – 4:00pm
Working Together: Communication with Your Rehabilitation Team (Panel Discussion)
Presented by: Elizabeth Skirving, Paige Pierozynski, Anna Szczurko, Cheryl Heard, John Shamoony, Brenda Enns, Lisa Johnston, Dr. Suwala, Joanne Andrews and Aaron Vanderkuyl

4:00pm – 4:15pm
Closing and Prizes

4:30pm- 5:30pm
Brain Injury Associations Annual General Meeting

Presentation Descriptions and speaker bios

9:00am - 10:00am

You, me and burn-out makes three: A realistic conversation about accessing care in a system on fire

Presented by: Stacie Dertinger and Jane Savage

Presentation Description: Our presentation will address the elephant in the room – burnout. A complex phenomenon that affects persons supported, family members, caregivers and the institutions that employ health staff in different but consistent ways. Our presentation will challenge the idea that you alone are responsible for addressing burnout, and instead, support a collaborative approach between persons supported, care providers and clinical professionals. Our presentation will inspire people supported, caregivers, and organizations to acknowledge the actual and perceived barriers, compassionate in their care approaches with themselves, and realistic about their approaches to providing care.

Learning Objectives:

1. Burnout is real, and it's not your sole responsibility to correct.
2. A cultural lens is important when considering the experience of stigma and shame when it comes to caregiver burnout.
3. Realistic goals and strategies are necessary to move forward through burnout.
4. There is an urgent need for family physicians, allied health practitioners, and therapists to actively inquire about, recognize and validate burnout in caregivers of those with neurodiverse needs.

Speaker Bio: Stacie has over 17 years of experience providing clinical rehabilitation and behavioural services to teens and adults who have complex care needs with intersecting disabilities of traumatic brain injury (TBI), mental illness, intellectual developmental delay, physical impairments, and addictions, in residential and community settings. Stacie graduated from Brock University with her Masters in Applied Disability Studies, and is a Board Certified Behaviour Analyst. She is the Clinical Director for Anchor Rehabilitation Support Services, and part time instructor at Mohawk College, George Brown College and McMaster University in the Autism and Behavioural Science programs. Stacie is a former director at large for the Ontario Association of Behaviour Analysis (ONTABA). She has presented at provincial and national conferences on creating ethical behavioural interventions, neurodiversity and inclusion practices, functional communication, ethics of sexuality, the intersection of mental health and disability, and how to achieve successful rehabilitation for hard to serve individuals.

Speaker Bio: Jane has focused her training and experience on cognitive behavioural, dialectical behavioural, and mindfulness-based approaches to managing anxiety, mood, obsessive-compulsive and related difficulties. Jane has experience in therapeutic roles providing crisis management and mental health and addiction services for concurrent disorders and dual diagnosis that she brings to her practice at Clear Water Integrated Health. During her Master of Social Work, she was trained in the assessment and treatment of individuals who committed a violent crime at the Forensic Services at St. Joseph's Hospital, Hamilton and the Ontario Review Board (ORB). Jane counsels individuals using a harm reduction approach to substance use disorders, and helps individuals find their strength to address mental illness while coping with the compounding challenges of living with side effects of their brain injury. She enjoys being a part of a person's story as they build a new normal after trauma, or grow to address depression, anxiety, or substance use in individual and group therapeutic setting.

10:00am – 10:30am

Navigating our unique recovery journey and finding purpose: A mother's recovery story

Presented by: Cynthia Aguiar

Presentation Description: This presentation will illuminate the individual paths of concussion recovery, emphasizing the uniqueness of each journey. Cynthia, a single mother of two, will share her personal story of recovery, highlighting the obstacles she encountered and the strategies that proved beneficial for her well-being. Additionally, the importance of movement, purpose, and joy in the recovery process will be explored, alongside insights on how family and friends can support these essential elements. Through this brief presentation, the aim is not only to validate the experiences of other concussion survivors but also to offer perspective on the challenges shaped by our distinct circumstances. Ultimately, Cynthia's journey serves as a beacon of hope for those navigating their own recovery, as it can lead us back to our purpose and fulfillment, such as her return to professional dance and reconnection with her children. Despite being one of the most difficult experiences we could face, this journey can often guide us back to ourselves, reaffirming our inner strength and resilience.

Learning Objectives:

1. Have a better understanding of unique challenges that concussion survivors face from a survivor's perspective(ex: Mothers).
2. Will have a better understanding of how we can further support concussion survivors through joy and purpose.
3. How movement can be a valuable tool in concussion recovery (with Cynthia being the example)
4. Have Hope.

Speaker Bio: Cynthia is a mother of two and concussion survivor. She is an Educator, Certified Life-Coach specializing in supporting mothers and women, entrepreneur, and somatic movement facilitator. Drawing from her personal concussion journey, Cynthia passionately advocates for and empowers fellow survivors, particularly mothers, fostering a sense of connection and understanding amidst their shared experiences. Her journey led to the creation of her podcast "Moms with Concussions" which aims to embrace the strength, resilience, and unique experiences of moms who've experienced a concussion, therefore reducing their feelings of isolation and creating a sense of community. Additionally, leveraging her background as a professional dancer within a professional movement company, she harnesses the power of movement to instill a sense of safety and embodiment in individuals through workshops, retreats, events, programs and classes. Through her workshops, courses, and media engagements including interviews with Rogers TV, Cynthia advocates for the importance of comprehensive support for concussion survivors, emphasizing not only recovery but also the cultivation of joy and purpose throughout the process. Her overarching goal remains rooted in raising awareness and fostering a community that embraces both the challenges and triumphs of concussion recovery.

10:45am – 11:45am

Sex and Gender Differences In Brain Injury and Why It Matters

Presented by: Katherine Price Snedaker

Presentation Description: This presentation provides an overview of sex and gender differences in brain injury between men and women based on scientific research and Katherine's experience working with the thousands of women. Katherine will address why these differences are important for patients, families, and clinicians to consider in care plans for women and girls. The lack of education and awareness can lead to a patient's unrealistic expectations of recovery time and an underestimation of the need for support from family and school/work. In addition, a lack of screening and training in a medical professional can inhibit diagnosis and delivery of healthcare service.

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe three ways in which brain injuries (including concussion) in women differ from males.
2. Articulate factors that may account for sex and gender differences in TBI incidences, severity, and recovery.
3. Understand the urgent need to develop "better" practices in the care and education of women with brain injury to facilitate recovery and positive long-term outcome.

Speaker Bio: Katherine Price Snedaker, LCSW, is the CEO and Founder of PINK Concussions, non-profit, focused on brain injury in women from sport, domestic violence, accidents or military service. Katherine is an international speaker, published researcher and a licensed therapist in Connecticut, Virginia, and California. Snedaker has presented on sex differences in brain injury in the across US, Canada, the UK, the EU, Australia and advantage

11:45am – 12:15pm

Fighting Inflammation: Brain Boosting Foods for Brain Health

Presented by: Cailee Heggestad

Presentation Description: This presentation will provide an overview of an anti-inflammatory meal pattern. Antioxidants are components of whole plant foods that may reduce protection against inflammation and the development of a number of chronic diseases. Antioxidants can be found in a wide variety of plant foods and different types of antioxidants can be found in different foods. The audience will learn about the nutrition-related anti-inflammatory compounds and the foods that provide them; as well as gaining confidence in the preparation of anti-inflammatory foods.

Learning Objectives:

1. Learn about the significance of inflammation as it related to brain health.
2. Learn about nutrition related anti-inflammatory compounds and the foods that provide them.
3. Gain confidence in knowing what foods provide an anti-inflammatory effect and can promote brain healing.

Speaker Bio: Cailee has been practicing as a Registered Dietitian for over 15 years; more than ten of those years as a specialist working with individuals who have sustained complex trauma such as injuries to the brain and/or spinal cord; amputations, multiple orthopedic traumas, or psychological impairment. She has a particular interest in working with brain injuries as she can also draw on the challenges that she faced from concussions that she suffered during her athletic career. Realizing that nutrition plays a critical role in healing, neuroplasticity, rehabilitation and recovery, Cailee has made it her mission to act as an advocate for those suffering from brain trauma and other complex injuries; assisting clients in reaching a new normal.

1:00pm – 1:30pm

Accessing Income Supports for Brain Injury Survivors

Presented by: Greg Willson

Presentation Description: There are many income supports available to brain injury survivors, depending on the circumstances of their injury. This presentation aims to educate survivors, caregivers and health care providers alike of the different supports available and when a survivor might qualify for those supports.

Learning Objectives:

1. Provide a general overview of the income supports potentially available to brain injury survivors.
2. Assist in understanding the criteria necessary to apply and receive income supports and the amount of funding potentially available.
3. Gain a general understanding of the Canada Disability Benefit, currently being debated in parliament.

Speaker Bio: Greg is a plaintiff personal injury lawyer at Lerner's. His training in education helps him to communicate effectively with his clients. Greg is down-to-earth, yet up-front and straightforward. He takes pride in speaking with plain language so his clients are left without any questions. Greg's goal is to make his clients feel comfortable and confident in their road to recovery. Outside of his work, Greg is active in the community. He enjoys coaching football and he is the chair of the London Helmets on Kids Committee.

1:30pm – 2:30pm

Life After Stroke: Navigating Challenges and Embracing Triumphs

Presented by: Dr. Siva Murugappan and Dr. Prema Samy

Presentation Description: Stroke journey of a stroke survivor Dr Murugappan, a General Surgeon and his wife Dr Prema Samy a ENT surgeon.

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand the struggles of stroke recovery
2. Appreciate the caregivers struggles
3. Recognise there is hope in this journey

2:30pm – 2:45pm

Movement Brain Break

Presented by: Cynthia Aguiar

Presentation Description: During this short movement break, Cynthia, a professional movement facilitator and concussion survivor, will help us step back into our bodies as we re-establish a sense of calm. This will include a gentle and fun movement break that will reduce tension, release energy and help cultivate a renewed sense of vitality.

Learning Objectives:

1. Learn simple movement tools that they will be able to use in the future to reduce tension and increase calm
2. Feel more grounded and able to continue on with the conference with more energy and less tension
3. Experience the power of movement

Speaker Bio: Cynthia is a mother of two and concussion survivor. She is an Educator, Certified Life-Coach specializing in supporting mothers and women, entrepreneur, and somatic movement facilitator. Drawing from her personal concussion journey, Cynthia passionately advocates for and empowers fellow survivors, particularly mothers, fostering a sense of connection and understanding amidst their shared experiences. Her journey led to the creation of her podcast “Moms with Concussions” which aims to embrace the strength, resilience, and unique experiences of moms who’ve experienced a concussion, therefore reducing their feelings of isolation and creating a sense of community. Additionally, leveraging her background as a professional dancer within a professional movement company, she harnesses the power of movement to instill a sense of safety and embodiment in individuals through workshops, retreats, events, programs and classes. Through her workshops, courses, and media engagements including interviews with Rogers TV, Cynthia advocates for the importance of comprehensive support for concussion survivors, emphasizing not only recovery but also the cultivation of joy and purpose throughout the process. Her overarching goal remains rooted in raising awareness and fostering a community that embraces both the challenges and triumphs of concussion recovery.

2:55pm – 4:00pm

Working Together: Communication with Your Rehabilitation Team (Panel Discussion)

Presented by: Elizabeth Skirving, Paige Pierozynski, Anna Szczurko, Cheryl Heard, John Shamoan, Brenda Enns, Lisa Johnston, Dr. Suwala, Joanne Andrews and Aaron Vanderkuyl.

Presentation Description: Panel discussion with a rehabilitation team highlighting how each professional is integral to the recovery from a brain injury.

Learning Objectives:

1. Compare and examine different rehabilitation professions available for brain injury clients.
2. Describe the key principles of the importance of working together and communicating as a team.
3. Identify who might benefit from these rehabilitation services in the community.

Speaker Bio: Elizabeth Skirving is a Speech-Language Pathologist located in London, and is registered with the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario. She completed her Master of Science degree in Speech-Language Pathology at PennWest University, a Master of Education in the area of Educational Psychology from Western University. Elizabeth is the owner and a speech-language pathologist at Fern Speech and Language Services in London, Ontario where she assesses, treats and provides consultation for children, adolescents and adults with acquired brain injury. Elizabeth participated in the development of a Position Statement by Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Canada: The SLP’s Role in Concussion Management.

Speaker Bio: Paige Pierozynski is the audiologist and owner of MedEar, a locally owned and operated audiology clinic in London, Ontario. She completed her undergraduate studies in Communication Sciences & Disorders at Wayne State University (2007) before obtaining a Doctorate of Audiology from Wayne State University (2011). She is a registered member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario (CASLPO).

Speaker Bio: Anna Szczurko moved to London Ontario back in 2005, not expecting to become a Forest City lifer! She completed her Law Degree at Western University, decided that London would remain her home and settled into her career at Siskinds LLP. A life long animal lover and self-confessed science nerd, Anna competes in horse jumping in her spare time. The value of helmets, safety and understanding the impacts of brain injury is important to her personally and professionally.

Speaker Bio: Cheryl Heard is an Occupational Therapist, having completed her undergraduate degree at Queen's University and her Occupational Therapy degree at McMaster University. After beginning her career in mental health and home care settings, she shifted into private practice, working with clients following injury or illness; this might relate to a motor vehicle accident, workplace injury or leave, or for Veterans needing support. In 2019, Cheryl took over as owner and Director at Novus Rehabilitation, where she supports a team of health professionals as they work with a variety of client needs.

Speaker Bio: John Shamoon is a graduate of the Developmental Services Worker program at Fanshawe College. His career has been devoted to serving a diverse population of individuals. His experience comes from day programs, treatment facilities, group homes and the school system. He is currently a rehabilitation support worker at Stride Rehabilitation. John is on the Board of Directors with the Brain Injury Association of London and Region. He is also on a committee with Spinal Cord Injury Ontario as a London, Ontario representative.

Speaker Bio: Brenda Enns is a physiotherapist with a special interest in neurological rehabilitation. She graduated from Western University with a Master's degree in Physiotherapy. She is the co-owner of Neuphysio North, a London based neurological private practice. She has 15 years of experience working with people who live with neurological injury such as brain injury, stroke and spinal cord injury. Brenda has a passion to assist individuals after serious injury, learn how to walk and balance again. She enjoys being a soccer mom, exercising, and playing leisure golf with her family.

Speaker Bio: Lisa Johnston is an independent Rehabilitation Therapist and certified aquatic therapist and owner of JRehab. Lisa earned her bachelor of arts undergraduate degree from King's University (2017) here in London and proceeded to earn her Occupational and Physiotherapy assistant (OTA/PTA) accreditation (2019) along with certifications from the Canadian Aquatic Rehab Institute, Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, and OBIA's neurorehabilitation and neurobehavioural programs in affiliation with Brock University. Lisa sustained repeat concussions during her adolescent years which contributes to her passion for providing individualized brain injury and orthopedic trauma support to clients.

Speaker Bio: Dr. Suwala is a London based Optometrist that graduated from the school of Optometry at the University of Waterloo. Since 2017 he has been the proud co-owner of London Vision Training Clinic where he assists people of all ages with binocular vision issues and what's commonly referred to as neuro-optometry. In his spare time, he loves spending time with his family, staying active and learning.

Speaker Bio: Joanne Andrews is the system's navigator at St. Joseph's Hearing Care. I have had a 30-year career in health care and although I have worked in various roles and various clinical areas, my passion and interest has always been in the area of brain injury rehab. I have seen the devastating effects a brain injury can have on an individual and their loved ones. I have also seen the resilience of the human spirit and what is amazingly possible through expert and compassionate rehab, services and supports. It is a privilege and honour for me to serve on the Board of the BIALR, an organization that brings supports, resources and hope to individuals with brain injuries and their families, as well as awareness to the community.

Speaker Bio: Aaron Vanderkuyl is a registered social worker. Servicing individuals and families with a variety of needs, from anxiety, grief and trauma, to interpersonal relationships. I have specific certification in cognitive behavioral therapy and emdr. I have worked for over a decade supporting families and individuals with managing trauma, grief, loss, and conflict. I provide families with counselling supports using many different approaches to suit the individual or group's needs. I am versed in cognitive behavioral models, stress management, mindfulness, and many other tools. My practice has involved working with people of all ages, primarily after a major accident, such as a motor vehicle collision. Because of this, I am able to offer support at very challenging times, and deal with issues related to PTSD, anxiety/depression, and in coping with uncertainty.