

Eli's Rehab Report

Offer Therapy Mix For Veterans With Traumatic Brain Injuries

Coordinated therapy could be the answer to re-wiring the brain after trauma.

Patients who've suffered traumatic brain injuries (TBI) may seem "normal" on the outside, but they often struggle to complete daily tasks -- and that's where therapy should come in.

Case in point: Rather than offering a single type of therapy, the **SHARE Initiative**, a program designed to help veterans and soldiers heal from TBI, is finding tremendous success with a combination of physical, speech and occupational therapy, coping skills and psychological counseling, reports ProPublica and NPR.

Based out of the **Shepherd Center for Brain and Spinal Cord Injury** in Atlanta, the SHARE Initiative administers an intensive evaluation to understand patients' cognitive needs and then develops a treatment plan that brings together therapists from different fields. The therapists coordinate their goals and strategies so that treatment is seamless.

Put it to work: Assign OTs to work with TBI patients on accomplishing tasks, overcoming memory problems, and handling frustration. They could accompany patients to the grocery store or work with them on running errands. PTs can help patients learn to manage lingering pain and restore balance. SLPs can work with patients to interpret the subtleties of conversation as well as restoring clear speech.

Bottom line: The goal is to offer cognitive therapy that re-trains the brain or helps it compensate for things it can no longer do. After the closely coordinated therapy, patients who started out "unable to do basic tasks ... can function independently," **Bonnie Schaudé**, one of the speech pathologists working with the program, told NPR.

Resource: Learn more about the SHARE Initiative at www.shepherd.org/patient-care/care-for-us-service-members.