

Red Flags for Communication Issues in Patients with a Concussion or Acquired Brain Injury

It is often difficult to know if a client is experiencing communication issues post-brain injury. Speech-language pathologist (S-LP) play a critical role as part of the clinical team. S-LPs can help identify the more subtle and, unfortunately, often-missed communication issues that result from a concussion or acquired brain injury.

As per the Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA) impact report (2012):

- 82% of ABI survivors have trouble having conversation in a group
- 91% have trouble making decisions some or most of the time.

Red Flags for Communication Issues:

- Difficulty following instructions at home, school and workplace
- Difficulty getting to the point (main idea) in a conversation.
 - Conversation is verbose (lengthy) and tangential (all over the place not making much sense)
- Contributes or adds very little to conversations.
 - Comments may be single words or short sentences
- Difficulty starting a conversation or commenting during a conversation
- Cannot follow a conversation due to difficulty recalling the content
- Cannot read newspapers, books and emails due to comprehension, concentration and memory issues
- Has word finding difficulties
- Has difficulty planning, problem-solving and making decisions - all skills involving language
- Blurts out inappropriate comments or swears (unlike before)
- Has issues with writing and reading

The client's family may comment that the patient:

- Can't make decisions
- Doesn't watch TV or read as much any more
- Makes inappropriate comments
- Doesn't initiate conversation or add to the conversation
- Talks too much
- Has trouble finding words (i.e., does not use specific names for items)
- Has memory difficulties
- Avoids social events