

Glossary of Terms

A

Advocacy Supporting an idea or cause with the intention of improving people's lives; includes influencing public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions.

Anoxia Lack of oxygen. When oxygen levels in the blood are low, brain cells are damaged.

Amnesia Memory impairment. Various kinds of amnesia: anterograde, retrograde, post-traumatic.

Aneurysm Weakness or injury to the wall of a blood vessel (artery or vein) causing a "ballooning". Weak area can burst resulting in a hemorrhage or stroke.

Anterograde amnesia The inability to make new memories.

Aphasia Loss of ability to verbally express oneself and/or to understand language. This is usually a result of injury to parts of the language centers in the brain.

Apraxia Loss of ability to perform purposeful, voluntary movements.

Assessment The initial phase of rehabilitation when the interdisciplinary team evaluates the current functioning of an individual in order to develop a treatment plan.

Ataxia Uncoordinated movement caused by damage to the cerebellum.

Auditory acuity The quality of what is heard.

Auditory memory Memory of things heard.

Axon The part of the nerve cell that carries outgoing messages from one area of the brain to another.

B

Bilateral Referring to both sides (e.g., of the brain).

C

Catheter A flexible tube used to drain fluid from the body or urine from the bladder.

Cerebrospinal fluid Liquid that fills the ventricles of the brain and surrounds the brain and spinal cord.

Closed head injury (non-penetrating) Trauma to the head that does not fracture or penetrate the skull but severely shakes the brain.

Confabulation Using imaginary or unrelated details to fill in gaps in memory.

Cognitive Thinking abilities.

Cognitive deficit Difficulty in reasoning, judgment, intuition, memory. Also, lack of awareness.

Coma A state of unconsciousness and unresponsiveness that results from disturbance or damage to areas of the brain.

Communication plan A plan that is established between a family and interdisciplinary team to ensure appropriate and timely exchange of information.

Contusion Any injury (usually caused by a blow) in which the skin is not broken (a bruise).

Craniectomy Surgery involving the removal of a piece of the skull bone to gain access to the brain (to remove a blood clot or drain an abscess or blood clot).

CT scan/CAT scan A series of computerized X-rays that take pictures of the brain or other parts of the body at various levels.

D

Deconditioning Condition where an individual's strength and energy gradually decreases due to lengthy bed rest.

Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) Blood clots that develop (especially in the legs) due to reduced movement.

Depressed skull fracture Skull fracture where one or more parts of the skull break and come into contact with the brain.

Diffuse Widespread, all over.

Diffuse Axonal Injury (DAI) Widespread injury to and disruption of the axons, the wires of communication that exist between brain cells. A result of the forces of trauma.

Diplopia Double vision.

Disinhibition Inability to control impulsive behavior and emotions.

Dysarthria Slurred speech and an abnormal voice quality caused by muscle weakness, paralysis, or incoordination of the speech muscles.

Dysphagia Inability or difficulty swallowing.

E

Electroencephalogram (EEG) Recording of electrical activity of the brain using electrodes (fine wires that carry electrical activity).

Encephalitis Inflammation of the brain.

Epidural hemorrhage Bleeding that occurs between the dura (tissue which covers and protects the brain) and the skull.

Epidural hematoma A collection of blood between the skull and dura.

Expressive aphasia Difficulty producing language (words, sentences).

F

Family Refers to two or more individuals who depend on one another for emotional, physical and/or economic support. The members of the family are self-defined.

Family Skills Training Learning opportunities offered to families by the interdisciplinary rehabilitation team to increase knowledge and skills for taking care of the patient in preparation for the next phase of treatment.

Federal Recovery Coordinator (FRC) Person who may be assigned to coordinate federal health care teams and private community resources to achieve the goals of an individualized recovery plan; the coordinator actively links the Veteran or Service Member with public and private resources that will meet their rehabilitation needs.

Focal Limited to a specific area (e.g., damage to a specific area of the brain).

Frontal lobe Front part of the brain involved in planning, organizing, problem solving, attention and personality.

G

Gastrostomy tube (G tube) A type of feeding tube inserted directly into the stomach.

H

Hematoma A collection of blood, usually clotted, caused by bleeding from a burst blood vessel.

Hemianopsia (visual field cut) Blindness for half the field of vision in one or both eyes.

Hemiparesis Weakness in one side of the body.

Hemiplegia Paralysis of one side of the body.

Hemispatial neglect Inattention or lack of response to objects on one side of the body or space.

Hemorrhage Bleeding following damage to the blood vessels.

Heterotopic ossification Formation of extra bone in the soft tissue around joints.

Hydrocephalus An excessive amount of cerebrospinal fluid in the brain.

I

Insight Awareness, a feeling of understanding.

Interdisciplinary rehabilitation team A group of professionals, representing several fields of expertise, working together to provide treatment, guidance and education throughout the rehabilitation process.

Intracranial pressure A build-up of pressure within the skull.

Intracranial hemorrhage Bleeding within the skull.

Intraventricular hemorrhage Blood that enters the open spaces (ventricles) of the brain.

J

Jejunostomy tube (J tube) A type of feeding tube surgically inserted into the small intestine.

L

Laceration A ragged tear in the tissue of the brain.

Liaison Nursing Officer (LNO) Military nurse who evaluates the patient prior to Medevac flight.

Limbic system Area of the brain that regulates mood, emotion, motivation, attention, and memory.

Logistics Family Care Map (FCM) logistics are related to moving the family and patient from the Military Treatment Facility to the Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center.

Long-term memory The ability to recall events that occurred many years ago.

M

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) A diagnostic technique that uses magnetic fields to produce images of the brain and other organs within the body without X-ray or other forms of radiation.

Medication management Use of medications to manage different medical, mental health or behavioral concerns to optimize recovery.

Military Liaison The military member assigned to assist the VA in specific military matters and to assist the patient in matters related to his/her branch of service (i.e., benefits and pay).

Military Treatment Facility (MTF) Term used for all military hospitals such as Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bethesda Naval Medical Center.

N

Nasogastric tube (NG tube) A thin, plastic tube passed through the nose into the stomach.

Non-Medical Attendant (NMA) A person placed on military orders by the military command and treatment team to accompany the Service Member to a treatment site to assist with personal care issues related to the nature of the injury.

Non-Medical Attendant orders (NMA) NMA Orders may be available to active duty service members and should be discussed with the military liaison at the PRC. The liaison will work with your military command to complete all necessary paperwork to ensure that appropriate payment is received.

O

Occipital lobe Located in the back of the brain; the center for sight.

P

Parietal lobe Area of the brain behind the frontal lobe. It receives and processes sensations of touch including pain, heat, cold, pressure, size, shape, and texture.

Penetrating head injury Injury or trauma to the head that penetrates or fractures the skull.

Polytrauma Network Site (PNS) A tier of the VA Polytrauma System of Care with dedicated team of interdisciplinary rehabilitation professionals who manage the post-acute *outpatient* needs of polytrauma patients and help to coordinate life-long rehabilitation services. There are 22 regional PNS teams located throughout the United States and Puerto Rico.

Polytrauma Point of Contact (PPOC) A tier of the VA Polytrauma System of Care. PPOCs are located in VA medical centers without an interdisciplinary polytrauma rehabilitation team. PPOCs are responsible for ensuring that Veterans and Service Members are referred to the nearest facility in the Polytrauma System of Care that is capable of providing the level of services required. There are 49 PPOCs located at VA medical centers throughout the United States.

Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center (PRC) A tier of the VA Polytrauma System of Care with a dedicated team of interdisciplinary rehabilitation professionals who provide acute, comprehensive *inpatient* medical and rehabilitation care for complex and severe polytraumatic injuries. There are four regional PRCs located in Richmond, VA, Tampa, FL, Minneapolis, MN, and Palo Alto, CA.

Polytrauma Support Clinic Team (PSCT) A tier of the VA Polytrauma System of Care with a dedicated team of interdisciplinary rehabilitation professionals who provide *outpatient* rehabilitation services for Veterans and active duty Service Members with mild and/or stable functional deficits from brain injury and polytrauma. There are 81 local PSCT teams located throughout the United States.

Polytrauma System of Care (PSC) A system of care for Veterans and returning Service Members who sustain complex combat or stateside injuries, including traumatic brain injury (TBI). The PSC is a four tiered system that provides comprehensive, high quality and interdisciplinary rehabilitation care in both inpatient and outpatient settings.

Polytrauma Transitional Rehabilitation Program (PTRP) A comprehensive program of rehabilitation services provided by a dedicated team of interdisciplinary rehabilitation professionals in a therapeutic, residential or day treatment setting. PTRP is designed to improve the person's physical, cognitive, psychological and social functioning with support and supervision. The goal of transitional rehabilitation is to return a person to the least restrictive environment including return to active duty, work and school, or independent living in the community with meaningful daily activities. PTRP programs are located at the four PRCs in Richmond, VA, Tampa, FL Palo Alto, CA and Minneapolis, MN.

Post-traumatic amnesia The inability to remember day-to-day events during a period of time following injury.

Pressure ulcer Bedsore caused by prolonged pressure or rubbing on vulnerable areas of the body (lower back, hips, ankles, heels, elbows and ear).

Prognosis Eventual outcome, a prediction of how things will turn out.

Pulmonary embolism (PE) Blood clot from another part of the body that travels to the lungs.

R

Rancho Los Amigos Scale of Cognitive Functioning Eight level scale used to track recovery from traumatic brain injury.

Receptive aphasia Difficulty understanding language.

Regenerate The ability to grow back.

Rehabilitation process Phases of therapeutic activities designed to increase a patient's independence and functioning.

Remote memory The ability to recall events that occurred many years ago.

Retrograde amnesia The inability to remember events that occurred for a time period immediately before a brain injury.

S

Self care Personal health maintenance; any activity to improve or restore physical or emotional health.

Short-term memory The ability to recall things occurring within a few seconds to a day.

Shunt A surgically placed tube which removes excess fluid from the brain.

Spasticity Increased tension or contractions of the muscles causing stiff and awkward movements.

Subarachnoid hemorrhage Bleeding which occurs between the layers of membranes coating the brain.

Subdural hemorrhage Bleeding which occurs between the brain and the dura (tissue which covers and protects the brain).

Subdural hematoma A blood clot that forms between the brain and the dura.

T

Temporal lobe The middle part of the brain on both sides, located behind the ear. This area controls our ability to process and understand the meaning of the verbal message and our memory functions.

Therapeutic pass An activity planned by the patient and treatment team in which the patient has permission to leave the facility with family or a team member(s) for the overall purpose of preparing a patient's transition to home and the community.

Tracking The ability to follow objects (with the eyes or ears).

Transition Patient Advocate (TPA) Individual who serves as a liaison between medical centers, staff and the community and advocates for the patient. The TPA acts as a communicator, facilitator and problem solver.

Traumatic brain injury Injury to the brain caused by an external force, resulting from a blast or a blow to the head.

V

Ventricles Connected hollow spaces in the brain that help to produce, filter, and distribute cerebrospinal fluid.

Visual agnosia Problems recognizing common objects.

Visual memory Memory of things seen.

Visual perceptual deficit Visual-spatial problems caused when the brain has difficulty understanding what is seen.

W

Wellness A state of physical, mental, and social well-being.