

# Parents as Caregivers of Injured Children

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# Significance

- **475,000 children (0-14 years old) in the US experience traumatic brain injuries each year, accounting for:**
  - **2,685 deaths**
  - **37,000 hospitalizations**
  - **435,000 emergency department visits.**
- **Preschoolers with even mild head injuries have impairments that continue into their school age years, including behavior disorders & lower reading ability that interfere with school performance.**
- **After their injury, most children return home to their families. Parents are ill-equipped to handle the challenges these children present.**
- **Our study of parent & family functioning after a preschool child's head injury is identifying factors (including severity of the child's head injury) associated with negative parent, parent-child, and family outcomes.**
- **Our findings have implications for practice, research, and policy.**

# Pre-discharge Clinical Implications

- Focus in-hospital assessment and interventions on mother's mental health and her perceptions of the child's injuries and hospital stay.
- Help mothers identify:
  - Sources of post-discharge support
  - Strategies for renewing contact with and maintaining existing sources &/or accessing new sources.
- Anticipatory guidance about caregiving challenges in first 3 months. Identify strategies to meet challenges.
- Daily availability of advanced practice nurse (APN) by phone to help mother with problem solving.

# Clinical Implications for Follow-up

- Monitor effectiveness of sources of support.
- Assess and support mother's mental health.
- Assess mother's perceptions of child's injuries and hospital stay and reflections on time since discharge.
  - Influence of injury and hospital stay fades through 6 months, but reappears at 12 months - the anniversary of the injury event
- More frequent surveillance of families at risk.

# Future Research

- **With this dataset:**
  - Relationship of child's abilities and deficits with mother, mother-child, and family functioning
  - Changes in outcomes over time
  - Identify factors related to pattern of change
- **Research with fathers**
  - Perceptions, outcomes, & risk factors may be different due to fathers' parent & family roles
  - Identify effective incentives to recruit & retain fathers
- **Development and testing of interventions for prevention of childhood accidental injury**

# Policy Implications

- **Allow flexibility in timing and number of visits to health care providers**
  - In first 3 - 6 months after hospital discharge
  - For families at risk
- **Provide public service announcements, email communications, &/or pamphlets about preventing childhood accidental injuries in child care facilities, grade schools, churches, and other common meeting places for parents, grandparents, and other family members**
- **Require short online course (like for human subjects protections) about accidental injury prevention for all child care providers, teachers, and others who come in contact with children, parents, and grandparents.**