Toronto abi Network conference 2026

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October 29 & 30, 2026

Marriott Downtown at CF Toronto Eaton Centre

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Welcome and Introduction

Toronto ABI Network Conference 2026

Welcome to our 14th biennial conference!

We are delighted to welcome you in person and grateful for the enthusiasm and support for this year's event. Over the next two days, we encourage you to reconnect with colleagues, clients, families, and sponsors; share accomplishments; and build new connections across the ABI community.

The program offers sessions for professionals, people with lived experience, and families affected by brain injury. We hope it provides opportunities to reflect on advances that have improved lives and explore future directions in research, resources, clinical practice, and personal journeys.

This conference would not be possible without the generous support of our returning and new sponsors. We encourage you to connect with them, visit their exhibits, and learn about services available across the system. We also thank the Conference Planning Committee for its invaluable contributions; the full volunteer committee list appears on page 7.

Conference proceeds support the Toronto ABI Network's ongoing work. Since 1995, the Network has addressed system fragmentation and inequitable access to services for people with acquired brain injury. As a recognized voice for the ABI community, it provides information, advice, and a forum to address issues affecting ABI services across the Greater Toronto Area and beyond.

We hope you find the conference informative, inspiring, and enjoyable. Thank you for joining us.

Sincerely,



Galyn Baptist
Chair
Conference Planning Committee



Charissa Levy
Executive Director
Toronto ABI Network

Planning Committee for Toronto ABI Network Conference 2026

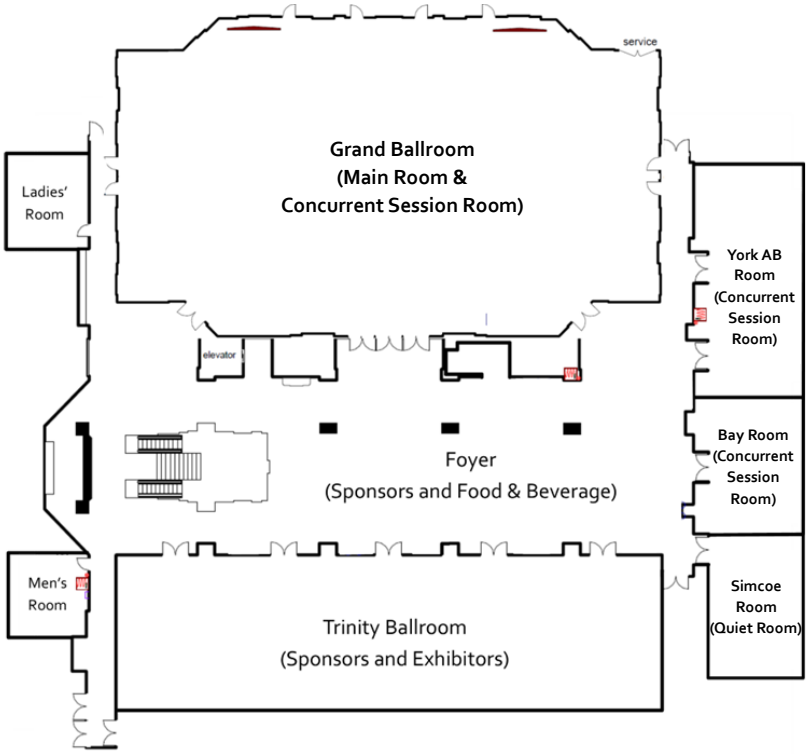
The Toronto ABI Network would like to thank the following individuals who participated on the 2026 conference planning committee for this event:

Volunteer Committee Members:
Galyn Baptist, Community Head Injury Resource Services (Planning Committee Chair)
Kindree Alkins, Bayshore NRIO
Jennifer Carr, Toronto ABI Network
Eden Dales, Eden Dales Social Work
Nicole Galeotalanza, Tristar Health
Nesanet Girma, University Health Network / Toronto Western Hospital
Miranda Hong, University Health Network / Toronto Rehabilitation Institute
Mirna Iskandar, Community Volunteer
Charissa Levy, Executive Director, Toronto ABI Network
Bob Murphy, Community Volunteer
Leanne Shapiro, FunctionAbility Rehabilitation Services
Johanna Skippon, Unity Health Toronto / Providence Healthcare

The planning committee would also like to extend our thanks to the Conference Services team of UHN Education for providing conference management services for this event.

Conference Venue Details

Marriott Eaton Centre Lower Convention Level



Wifi

Wi-Fi is available at the Toronto Marriott Downtown Eaton Centre Hotel.

Network: MarriottBonvoy_Conf
Password: ABINetwork2026

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WRIGHT REHAB

Wright Rehab has dedicated the past 25 years to helping Ontarians navigate life after serious injury.

The organization has established an ABI specialization, providing personalized rehabilitation and support for clients & their families.

Their multidisciplinary team works across Ontario, delivering care in the places where clients live while participating in their communities.

You can learn more about them at **wrightrehab.ca** or follow their latest updates at **@wright.rehab**.



Provincial ABI Navigators Contact Information

Legacy LHIN 1 – Erie St. Clair
ABI and Exceptional Supports Manager
Assisted Living Southwestern Ontario
1100 University Ave. W.
Windsor, ON N9A 5S7
(519) 969-8188

Legacy LHIN 2 – South West
Regional ABI System Navigator
St. Joseph's Health Care London
Parkwood Institute Main Building
Acquired Brain Injury Program
P. O. Box 5777, Station B
London ON N6A 4V2 | (519) 685-4292 ext 42988

Legacy LHIN 3 – Waterloo Wellington
ABI Intensive Care Coordinator & System Navigator
Traverse Independence
1-1382 Weber St E, Unit 1
Kitchener, ON N2A 1C4
(519) 741-5845 | Direct: (519) 580-9206

Legacy LHIN 4 – Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brand
Please connect with one of the navigators in the other regions for assistance.

Legacy LHIN 5 & 6 – Central West & Mississauga Halton
Clinical Services Manager & System Navigator Mind Forward
176 Robert Speck Pkwy
Mississauga, ON L4Z 3G1
(905) 302-3423

Legacy LHIN 7 – Toronto Central
ABI Referral Coordinator & System Navigator Toronto ABI Network
(416) 340-4800 x8660

Legacy LHIN 8 – Central
ABI System Navigator
Central ABI Collaborative
62 Finch Ave. W.
Toronto, ON M2N 7G1
(416) 240-8000 x755

Legacy LHIN 9 – Central East
CE ABI System Navigator
Brain Injury Association of Peterborough Region
158 Charlotte Street
Peterborough, ON K9J 2T8
(705) 741-1172
Toll Free: 1 (800) 854-9738 | Direct: (705) 875-7839

Legacy LHIN 10 – South East
SEO ABI System Navigator
Community Brain Injury Services
401-303 Bagot St. Lasalle Mews
Kingston, ON K7K 5W7
(613) 547-6969 x37165

Legacy LHIN 11 – Champlain
Champlain System Navigator for ABI
Champlain – Ontario Health atHome
100 – 4200 Labelle St.
Ottawa, ON K1J 1J8
(613) 310-2222 x5963
Toll Free: 1-800-538-0520 x5963 Direct: (613) 292-8681

Legacy LHIN 12 – North Simcoe Muskoka
North Simcoe Muskoka ABI System Navigator
North Simcoe Muskoka ABI Collaborative
21 Essa Rd. Unit 1
Barrie, ON L4N 3K4
(705) 734-2178 x228 | Toll Free: 1-877-320-1950

Legacy LHIN 13 – North East
Regional ABI System Navigator
March of Dimes Canada
96 Larch St. Unit 400
Sudbury, ON P3E 1C1
(705) 671-3188

Legacy LHIN 13 – North West
Intake Coordinator & ABI System Navigator
Brain Injury Services of Northern Ontario
426 Balmoral St.
Thunder Bay, ON P78 5G8
(807) 623-1188

People's Choice Award

Vote for Your Favourite Rapid Podium Presentation

To acknowledge the incredible amount of work that goes into rapid podium presentations, the conference planning committee is requesting all registrants to vote for their favourite presentation via the online survey!

Criteria:

- Originality and innovativeness
- Relevance to previous work
- Building on and relevance ot body of knowledge
- Evidence and objectivity
- Clarity and presentation
- Quality and logical progression of argument
- Theoretical and practical implications

The URL to vote will be posted on the screens in the Main Room immediately following the Rapid Podium Presentations, during the Q & A session. There will also be an email sent out on Thursday morning to all delegates with the link included.

You can either click on the link to access the survey or type in the URL that will be displayed on the screen into your smart phone / tablet / laptop.

If you do not have a smart phone / tablet / laptop, we will have a limited number of paper ballots available at registration.

Voting will close at 10:30 am on Day 2, at the end of the Morning Break.

The award winner will be announced during the closing remarks on October 30, 2026.

Presentations for Toronto ABI Network Conference 2026

The presentation slides that we receive consent to post online will be available on the conference website and will be password protected. The password will be ABI2026 (case sensitive). We will send a notification when the presentations are ready for viewing. Please allow us at least 2 weeks to post all the content.
https://events.myconferencesuite.com/ABI2026/page/Program

Delegate Directory

A full list of attendees can be found at: https://bit.ly/4yLmg46

The list for conference delegates is based on information provided by registrants who registered before October 24, 2026. This list excludes those registrants who requested not to have their information included. We apologize in advance for any errors or omissions ot this list.

Day 1: Thursday October 29, 2026

7:30	**Registration & Breakfast**	
8:30	**Opening Remarks**	**Grand Ballroom**
8:45	**Keynote Address**	**Grand Ballroom**
	What If They're Not Ready Yet? Practical Approaches to Substance Use After Brain Injury ***Dr. Carolyn Lemsky*** *PhD, CPsych, ABPP-CN, C-CAT (MB)* *Neuropsychologist and Clinical Director, Community Head Injury Resource Services (CHIRS)*	
9:45	**PIA & OBIA Awards of Excellence in Brain Injury Rehabilitation Presentation**	**Grand Ballroom**
10:15	**Break**	
10:45	**Concurrent Sessions** – *All 3 sessions will run at the same time; select 1 to attend*	
A	**Improving Staff Comfort and Skill in Managing Challenging Behaviour after Brain Injury** ***Lynn Renton*** *BScOT, Coordinator, Nova Scotia Health ABI Provincial Network, Nova Scotia Health Acquired Brain Injury Program*	**Grand Ballroom**
B	**Can Caregiving get E.A.S.I.E.R? Recommendations from a Review of Caregiver Outcomes and Interventions** ***Arman Ali*** *MPH, Research Associate, KITE Research Institute, Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, University Health Network;* ***Judith Gargaro*** *BSc, Med, Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, University Health Network;* ***Jackie Quemby; Ruth Wilcock,*** *CEO, Ontario Brain Injury Association*	**Bay**
C	***Beyond the Diagnosis: Legal Perspectives on Intimate Partner Violence, Addiction and Catastrophic Impairment*** ***Charles Jung****, Partner, Oatley Vigmond LLP;* ***William Harding****, Partner, McLeish Orlando Lawyers LLP;* ***Michael Bennett****, Partner, Thomson Rogers LLP*	**York AB**
11:30	**Transition Time**	
11:40	**Concurrent Sessions** – *All 3 sessions will run at the same time; select 1 to attend*	
A	**When Recovery Stalls: Identity Disruption as a Nervous System Process in ABI Rehabilitation** ***Irina Valentin*** *PhD, C.Psych. Neuropsychologist / Clinical Psychologist / School Psychologist, Valentin Psychology Professional Corp.*	**Grand Ballroom**
B	**From Survival Mode to Values-Based Living: Acceptance and Commitment Training for ABI Caregivers** ***Andrea Alves*** *OT (Reg ON), Occupational Therapist, Community Head Injury Resource Services (CHIRS)* ***Benjamin Promane*** *MSW, RSW, Registered Social Worker, CHIRS*	**Bay**
C	**The Toronto Concussion Study: Fatigue Trajectories and Vocational Recovery Following Concussion** ***Carl Froilan Leochico*** *MD, FPARM, MHSc, Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, University Health Network* ***Mark Bayley*** *MD, FRCPC, University Health Network*	**York AB**
12:25	**Lunch & Networking** Brief Overview: ABI Provincial Navigators: The Missing Link – Cathy Halovanic, Julie Osbelt (12:50 – 1:00 pm)	
1:25	**Rapid Podium Presentations** *6 presentations, 8 minutes each with a group Q & A at the end*	**Grand Ballroom**
RPP 1	**The Toronto Concussion Study: Exploring the Role of Pre-Injury Activity Levels in Non-Sports Concussion Recovery** *Alice Wang HBSc Candidate, University of Toronto*	
RPP 2	**Responding to Complexity: A System-Driven Approach to ABI Crisis Case Management** *Julie Osbelt, Toronto ABI Network & Renee Brassard, Cota*	
RPP 3	**Overdose-Related Brain Injury: Bridging Harm Reduction and Brain Injury Care through Insights from People Who Use Drugs and Caregivers** *Liam Michaud PhD(c), York University*	
RPP 4	**Examining the Final Discharge Destinations and Health Equity Characteristics of Moderate to Severe Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors** *Kassandra Kenyon RN, & Lynne Downey MSc. OT, OT Reg (Ont), Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre*	
RPP5	**A Legally Informed Decision-Support Tool for At-Risk Discharges in Acquired Brain Injury Rehabilitation** *Ami Li MD, & Jordan Pelc MD, Sinai Health*	

Day 1: Thursday October 29, 2026

1:25	**Rapid Podium Presentations** *6 presentations, 8 minutes each with a group Q & A at the end*	**Grand Ballroom**
RPP 6	**Building Awareness and Service Provider Capacity for Intimate Partner Violence Brain Injury in Canada** *Halina (Lin) Haag MSW, RSW, PhD, Wilfrid Laurier University*	
2:20	**Transition Time**	
2:30	**Concurrent Sessions** – *All 3 sessions will run at the same time; select 1 to attend*	
A	**A Functional Approach to Chronic Pain Management in the ABI Population** ***Calvin Leung*** *OT Reg (Ont). Occupational Therapist, FunctionAbility*	**Grand Ballroom**
B	**Bridging the Gap After Brain Injury: Expanding the Continuum of Care for Work and Financial Wellbeing** ***Heather Nuttall*** *MSW, RSW, Registered Social Worker, OBIA;* ***Zoe Fallis*** *OT Reg (Ont.), Occupational Therapist, OBIA*	**York AB**
C	**How Can We Better Support People with Traumatic Brain Injury after Intimate Partner Violence? Development of a Clinical Practice Guideline and Essential Tools and Resources.** ***Judith Gargaro*** *BSc, Med, Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, University Health Network;* ***Danielle Toccalino*** *PhD, PMP, University of Toronto;* ***Halina (Lin) Haag*** *MSW, RSW, PhD, Wilfrid Laurier Univer.*	**Bay**
3:15	**Break**	
3:45	**Keynote Address**	**Grand Ballroom**
	Project-Based Intervention: A Practical Solution for Delivering Evidence-Based Rehabilitation in Real-Life Contexts (Grand Ballroom) ***Deidre (Dee) Sperry*** *MSc, S-LP Reg. CASLPO Reg. NLCHP* *Assistant Clinical Professor (Part Time), School of Rehabilitation Science, Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University*	
4:45	**Closing Remarks, End of Day 1**	

Day 2: Friday October 30, 2026

7:30	**Breakfast**	
8:45	**Greetings**	**Grand Ballroom**
9:00	**Keynote Address**	**Grand Ballroom**
	Enhancing the Precision and Effectiveness of Cognitive Rehabilitation by Applying the RTSS Framework ***Dr. McKay Moore Sohlberg*** *PhD, CCC-SLP, ASHA Fellow* *Professor of Communication Disorders and Sciences at the University of Oregon*	
10:00	**Break & Last Vote for People's Choice Award**	
10:30	**Concurrent Sessions** – *All 3 sessions will run at the same time; select 1 to attend*	
A	**Beyond Accessibility: Clinical Decision-Making for Housing Accommodations in Acquired Brain Injury** ***Alicia Kralt*** *BSc, MSc (OT), OT Reg (Ont). Occupational Therapist, FunctionAbility*	**York AB**
B	**Enhancing Access to Bail Support in Ontario: A Focus on Navigation for Women with Brain Injury** ***Flora Matheson*** *PhD, Director of Programs, Unity Health Toronto;* ***Arthur McLuhan*** *MA, Unity Health Toronto;* ***Lucy Gudgeon*** *Director of Programs, Elizabeth Fry Society Toronto*	**Bay**
C	**Beyond the Mandate: Simple Tools for Responding to Crisis and Suicidality in ABI Clients** ***Eden Dales*** *BA, MSW, RSW, Eden Dales Social Work;* ***Uri Carmel-Kraiem*** *MSW, RSW*	**Grand Ballroom**
11:15	**Lunch**	
12:30	**Recharging Yoga Session – Angie Davis**	**Grand Ballroom**
12:45	**Keynote Address**	**Grand Ballroom**
	The Importance of Choices ***Dean Wardak****, Motivational Speaker; Director, Tamara Gordon Foundation; Patient Partner, EMPaCT, Women's College Hospital; Brain Injury Survivor and Inspirational Speaker*	
1:45	**Closing Remarks, Presentation of People's Choice Award, Sponsor Prize Winners**	

Day 1: Thursday October 29, 2026 **Keynote Address: 8:45 am – 9:45 am**
Location: Grand Ballroom

Title:
What If They're Not Ready Yet? Practical Approaches to Substance Use After Brain Injury

Presenter:
Dr. Carolyn Lemsky PhD, CPsych, ABPP-CN, C-CAT (MB)
Neuropsychologist and Clinical Director, Community Head Injury Resource Services (CHIRS)

Presentation Synopsis:
Nearly half of all people who are hospitalized after a brain injury have a history of substance misuse. Without intervention, most will return to their pre-injury pattern of use within a year or two after injury—sooner when the injury is milder. A substantial portion of people who had been in recovery for their substance use disorder pre-injury will see a resurgence of their addictions. About 20 percent will develop entirely new problems. Integrated care for substance use and brain injury is the gold standard for care. But what do you do when that seems out of reach? How do you support clients who are not ready to address problems with substance use?

This session will provide clinicians with steps they can take to expand their comfort and capacity to intervene with people who continue to use substances. Key concepts will include how to exploit existing expertise, using harm reduction principles in clinical settings, supporting addictions care and making referrals that stick.

Presenter Biography:
Dr. Carolyn Lemsky is a board-certified neuropsychologist with over 30 years of experience working in rehabilitation settings in the U.S. and Canada. She is the Clinical Director at Community Head Injury Resource Services (CHIRS) of Toronto—a Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funded agency designed to promote community re-integration of persons living with the effects of acquired brain injury. She is also an adjunct professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Toronto

Dr. Lemsky is the director of the Substance Use and Brain Injury Bridging Project. In that role she has provided training and consultation to programs across Canada, the US and Australia to accommodate the complex needs of people living with the effects of traumatic brain injury and co-occurring substance use and mental health challenges. Products of the SUBI partnership include the Substance Use and Brain Injury Workbook, second edition and the Brain Injury Tool Kit supported by the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators in the US.

In addition to frequent conference presentations, Dr. Lemsky has contributed book chapters and articles to the neuropsychology and brain injury literature. She receives frequent invitations to provide training and conference presentations on the SUBI project internationally.

Day 1: Thursday October 29, 2026 **Concurrent Session 1A: 10:45 am – 11:30 am**
Location: Grand Ballroom

Title:
Improving Staff Comfort and Skill in Managing Challenging Behaviour after Brain Injury

Presenter:
Lynn Renton BScOT
Coordinator, Nova Scotia Health ABI Provincial Network, Nova Scotia Health Acquired Brain Injury Program

Presentation Synopsis:
Managing behaviours of concern following acquired brain injury can be challenging for both patients and healthcare providers, particularly in rehabilitation settings. This presentation will highlight a quality improvement initiative implemented on a tertiary inpatient brain injury rehabilitation unit to enhance staff knowledge, confidence, and skills in behaviour care planning. Attendees will learn how a collaborative, interdisciplinary, and trauma-informed approach—supported by data collection, targeted education, and continuous quality improvement—led to meaningful improvements in staff competence and the delivery of person-centred care for individuals with complex behavioural needs.

Presenter Biography:
Lynn Renton is an Occupational Therapist with more than 30 years of experience in Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) care, spanning a full continuum of services across Ontario and Nova Scotia. In her current role as Coordinator of the Nova Scotia Health Provincial ABI Network, she is committed to building clinician capacity to deliver best-practice care for individuals living with ABI throughout the province.

Since 2024, she has had the privilege of supporting a quality improvement initiative within the Nova Scotia Health inpatient ABI rehabilitation program, with a focus on behaviour care planning. She looks forward to sharing practical processes and tools to support teams in addressing behaviours of concern in individuals with brain injury.

Lynn lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, with her partner. In her free time, she enjoys walking, biking, and exploring the province's many beautiful beaches.

Day 1: Thursday October 29, 2026 **Concurrent Session 1B: 10:45 am – 11:30 am**
Location: Bay

Title:
Can Caregiving get E.A.S.I.E.R? Recommendations from a Review of Caregiver Outcomes and Interventions

Presenters:
Arman Ali MPH
Research Associate, KITE Research Institute, Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, University Health Network
Judith Gargaro BSc, Med
Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, University Health Network
Jackie Quemby
Ruth Wilcock, CEO, Ontario Brain Injury Association

Presentation Synopsis:
Caring for a person with an acquired brain injury (ABI) can have profound emotional, social, and financial impacts on caregivers, yet their needs often remain underrecognized. This presentation will share findings from a comprehensive knowledge synthesis and caregiver engagement project that examined the current state of caregiver outcomes and support interventions. Participants will explore the evidence behind effective psychosocial supports, learn about the novel E.A.S.I.E.R. framework (Empowerment, Advocacy, Support, Improvement, Education, and Research), and discuss practical recommendations for improving caregiver well-being through policy, education, healthcare system changes, and person-centred support across the continuum of care.

Presenter Biographies:
As a Research Associate at the KITE Research Institute, Arman has undertaken many knowledge translation and implementation activities related to traumatic brain injury (TBI) and spinal cord injury (SCI), including initiatives focused on health services data and caregiving. Through his work, Arman has collaborated with key partners from across the neurotrauma care continuum to help build and implement the Neurotrauma Care Pathways and companion Quality Indicators. Arman's professional interests in include health services research, quality improvement, policy development, implementation science, and outcome measurement. Over the years, Arman has combined his passion for understanding human brain and behaviour with his knowledge of public health and health services to support research and implementation initiatives for TBI and stroke across Ontario.

Judy Gargaro is the Manager for the Neurotrauma Care Pathways Initiative and was previously the Program Director for the ABI program at the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation (ONF). Judy has been working on the implementation and evaluation of the Neurotrauma Care Pathways with a focus on how best to support persons with a brain and/or spinal cord injury with comorbidities and who have traditionally been under-served by the healthcare system. Other initiatives include developing a Neurotrauma data strategy to assess quality of care, the Provincial TBI Report Card and the implementation of the Standards and Clinical Practice Guidelines for Concussion/Mild Traumatic Brain Injury and for the Rehabilitation of Moderate to Severe Traumatic Brain Injury. In all this work Judy collaborates with administrators, clinicians and policy makers to improve the quality of care available to persons after all severities of neurotrauma.

Jackie Quemby is retired from Rogers Communications, where she served as Publisher in the Healthcare Division. Since 2015, she has been a full-time caregiver for her husband following his Anoxic Brain Injury.

Jackie is an active advocate in the brain injury community, serving on the Board of the Brain Injury Association of Peterborough and the Provincial Advisory Team for Brain Injury Speaks through the Ontario Brain Injury Association. She also contributes as a member of the Steering Committee for the Neurotrauma Care Pathways CIHR Caregiving Grant Research Project.

Ruth Wilcock is the Chief Executive Officer of the Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA), where she has dedicated over 20 years to improving the lives of individuals affected by brain injury through advocacy, education, and support services. A Registered Psychotherapist with over three decades of experience in the social services field, Ruth previously spent 17 years—including 13 as Executive Director—leading a long-term residential program for women facing significant personal challenges. At OBIA, she continues to champion vulnerable populations and strengthen the province's network of local brain injury associations and support groups.

Day 1: Thursday October 29, 2026 **Concurrent Session 1C: 10:45 am – 11:30 am**
Location: York AB

Title:
Beyond the Diagnosis: Legal Perspectives on Intimate Partner Violence, Addiction and Catastrophic Impairment

Presenters:
Charles Jung, Partner, Oatley Vigmond LLP
William Harding, Partner, McLeish Orlando Lawyers LLP
Michael Bennett, Partner, Thomson Rogers LLP

Presentation Synopsis:
Understanding the impact of acquired brain injury (ABI) on social functioning raises complex questions for healthcare providers and legal professionals. This presentation will explore the legal dimensions of intimate partner violence, substance use and addiction, and catastrophic impairment. Participants will examine developments concerning the intimate partner violence tort, consider the implications of addiction for personal injury claims, and explore catastrophic impairment under Criterion 8 through Chapter 14 of the AMA Guides and recent License Appeal Tribunal decisions. The session will highlight the role of clinical observations and documentation in demonstrating functional impairment, with practical discussion and audience questions connecting these legal issues to everyday rehabilitation practice.

Presenter Biographies:
Charles Jung is a Partner at Oatley Vigmond LLP and practices exclusively in plaintiff personal injury litigation. He represents people with serious injuries in claims involving motor vehicle accidents, accident benefits, medical malpractice, municipal liability, sporting injuries and occupiers' liability. Charles has represented clients before the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, the License Appeal Tribunal and the Social Benefits Tribunal and has co-counselled jury trials through verdicts. He also regularly writes and speaks on personal injury law, including programs focused on catastrophic impairment and motor vehicle litigation.

William Harding is a Partner at McLeish Orlando Lawyers LLP, where he represents people and families affected by serious injury or the death of a loved one. His personal experience with the wrongful death of a family member shaped his commitment to advocating for others facing life-altering circumstances. William has appeared before the License Appeal Tribunal, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice and the Ontario Court of Appeal. As counsel, he obtained a Superior Court judgment of more than $12.1 million for a client who sustained a severe spinal cord injury.

Michael Bennett is a Partner at Thomson Rogers LLP and practices exclusively in personal injury law, representing injured people and their families. He focuses on complex claims involving brain injuries, spinal cord injuries and serious orthopedic injuries, including disputes over insurance coverage, benefit entitlements and catastrophic impairment. Michael has appeared before the Ontario Court of Appeal, the Superior Court of Justice of Ontario, the Licence Appeals Tribunal and other regulatory bodies. He's previously represented insurance companies and the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee, experience which now informs his advocacy for clients.

Day 1: Thursday October 29, 2026 **Concurrent Session 2A: 11:40 am – 12:25 pm**
Location: Grand Ballroom

Title:
When Recovery Stalls: Identity Disruption as a Nervous System Process in ABI Rehabilitation

Presenter:
Irina Valentin PhD, C.Psych. Neuropsychologist / Clinical Psychologist / School Psychologist, Valentin Psychology Professional Corp.

Presentation Synopsis:
Many individuals recovering from acquired brain injury (ABI) demonstrate measurable cognitive improvements yet continue to experience challenges with motivation, self-direction, emotional regulation, relationships, and meaningful participation in daily life. This presentation will introduce the concept of identity disruption as an important and often overlooked contributor to persistent functional difficulties following ABI, extending beyond traditional symptom-focused models of recovery. Drawing from neuropsychology, polyvagal theory, and trauma-informed care, participants will explore identity as a multi-level nervous system process and learn practical assessment and intervention approaches to support recovery across the lifespan. Through clinical examples, the session will highlight a four-stage recovery pathway—stabilize, re-anchor, integrate, and reinstate—and provide interdisciplinary strategies to help clinicians better recognize and address identity-level challenges in ABI rehabilitation.

Presenter Biography:
Dr. Irina Valentin, PhD, CPsych, is a clinical neuropsychologist in Toronto with more than four decades of clinical experience and over thirty years of practice in Canada. She is the Director of Valentin Psychology Professional Corporation and specializes in acquired brain injury, trauma, executive functioning, and identity reconstruction following neurological and psychological disruption. In addition to her clinical work, Dr. Valentin is an active scholar whose recent publications examine developmental integration, trauma recovery, predictive processing, and identity transformation. She is the founder of KINERGIA International Institute of Resilience and Human Development, a Canada–Ukraine initiative focused on trauma recovery, education, and human development. Her current work explores how disruptions in identity and self-regulation contribute to stalled recovery following acquired brain injury and how rehabilitation can support not only symptom reduction but the reorganization of a meaningful and sustainable sense of self.

Day 1: Thursday October 29, 2026 **Concurrent Session 2B: 11:40 am – 12:25 pm**
Location: Bay

Title:
From Survival Mode to Values-Based Living: Acceptance and Commitment Training for ABI Caregivers

Presenters:
Andrea Alves OT (Reg ON), Occupational Therapist, Community Head Injury Resource Services (CHIRS)
Benjamin Promane MSW, RSW - Registered Social Worker, CHIRS

Presentation Synopsis:
Caregiving for a loved one with moderate to severe acquired brain injury (ABI) often involves profound life changes, including grief, shifting identities, emotional distress, and the ongoing challenge of balancing personal well-being with caregiving responsibilities. This presentation will introduce the Acceptance and Commitment Training (ACT) for Families Workshop, a caregiver-focused intervention designed to build psychological flexibility, resilience, and values-based living through experiential, skills-based learning. Participants will explore how ACT principles can support caregiver mental health, hear directly from caregiver participants about their experiences applying these strategies, and learn from early program evaluation findings. The session will also highlight the importance of co-designing caregiver programs, incorporating feedback, and developing sustainable community-based supports that empower caregivers beyond survival mode toward meaningful and values-driven lives.

Presenter Biographies:
As a registered Occupational Therapist, Andrea (she/her) works with individuals with acquired brain injuries and co-occurring chronic diseases, mental health and/or substance use concerns to enhance their safety, well-being, and participation in home and community. She utilizes strengths-based, trauma-informed, and harm reduction approaches to care.

Andrea earned her Master of Science in Occupational Therapy at the University of Toronto and has additional training in Cognitive Rehabilitation, Motivational Interviewing, and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT). Since joining CHIRS in 2023, Andrea partners with clients to reach their goals, develops group programming and community partnerships, and facilitates the Substance Use and Brain Injury (SUBI), Creative Wellness, and ACT for Caregivers groups.

Ben is a Registered Social Worker with broad experience working with individuals and families in community, residential and education settings. He earned a Master of Social Work from the University of Windsor and has additional training in Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), Motivational Interviewing, and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). He also serves as an Adjunct Lecturer at the University of Toronto's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work.

Since joining CHIRS in 2024, Ben has been a member of the clinical team providing individual, couples, family, and group interventions for individuals living with brain injury and their families. He leads the implementation of the organization's ethical framework, offers clinical consultation to client support teams, facilitates staff training, contributes to family support program development, and supervises Master of Social Work students in their clinical placements.

Day 1: Thursday October 29, 2026 **Concurrent Session 2C: 11:40 am – 12:25 pm**
Location: York AB

Title:
The Toronto Concussion Study: Fatigue Trajectories and Vocational Recovery Following Concussion

Presenters:
Carl Froilan Leochico MD, MHSc, Toronto Rehab - University Health Network
Mark Bayley MD, FRCPC – University Health Network

Presentation Synopsis:
Fatigue is one of the most common and persistent symptoms following concussion and can significantly interfere with return to work, school, and other meaningful activities. This presentation will highlight findings from the Toronto Concussion Study, which examines longitudinal fatigue trajectories and their relationship with vocational recovery following concussion. Participants will learn how integrating guideline-informed, standardized fatigue assessment into routine clinical care can help identify individuals at risk for prolonged recovery, support individualized return-to-role planning, and guide evidence-based interventions such as activity pacing, graded return-to-work strategies, and workplace accommodations. The session will provide practical approaches for interdisciplinary teams seeking to improve functional outcomes and support successful reintegration after concussion.

Presenter Biographies:
Dr. Carl Froilan Leochico is currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto and a staff physiatrist in the Brain Program at Toronto Rehab and in the Brain Medicine Clinic at Sunnybrook Hospital. His clinical roles span neurophysiatry care for concussion, acquired brain injuries, hypertonicity, and Functional Neurological Disorders (FND).

Dr. Mark Bayley is Program Medical Director and senior scientist at KITE research institute at UHN's-Rehab Program. He is also Professor and Division Director in the Division of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in the Faculty of Medicine at University of Toronto. Mark has led multicenter trials of exercise, technology and medications combined with exercise to enhance outcomes after stroke, brain injury and concussion.

Day 1: Thursday October 29, 2026 **Rapid Podium Presentations: 1:25 pm – 2:20 pm**
Location: Grand Ballroom

Rapid Podium Presentations are unique, 8 minute-long presentations on an initiative or research with a focus on the key "take-away" messages for the audience. There will be six presentations made during this session.

Rapid Podium Presentation Title #1:
The Toronto Concussion Study: Exploring the Role of Pre-Injury Activity Levels in Non-Sports Concussion Recovery

Presenter:
Alice Wang HBSc Candidate, University of Toronto

Presenter Biography:
Alice Wang is a 4th year Undergraduate student at the university of Toronto studying neuroscience. She recently completed her undergraduate thesis at the Hull-Ellis Concussion Clinic under Dr. Mark Bayley and Tharshini Chandra, exploring the role of pre-injury exercise in concussion recovery.

Rapid Podium Presentation Title #2:
Responding to Complexity: A System-Driven Approach to ABI Crisis Case Management

Presenters:

Julie Osbelt, Toronto ABI Network
Renee Brassard, Cota

Presenter Biographies:
Julie Osbelt is the Toronto ABI System Navigator and Referral Coordinator with the Toronto ABI Network, bringing more than 25 years of experience in the field of acquired brain injury. Over the past 14 years, she has been instrumental in delivering comprehensive navigation and coordination support, helping individuals with ABI, their families, and service providers access essential resources and supports.
Julie is deeply committed to fostering collaboration across sectors and throughout the ABI continuum, working with partners to identify system gaps and drive meaningful improvements. She is passionate about equitable access to publicly funded ABI programs and takes pride in offering personalized guidance that empowers individuals and families to find the right pathways to care. Julie's work is grounded in compassion, connection, and a strong belief in building a more responsive and integrated system.

Renee Brassard is a Case Manager and Social Worker with the ABI Crisis Team at Cota, where she provides short-term, community-based crisis intervention for individuals living with acquired brain injury. She holds a Master of Social Work and is committed to delivering person-centered, trauma-informed care. Prior to this role, Renee developed a strong foundation supporting individuals with complex needs across probation and bail settings, as well as in residential addiction services, working within high-risk, fast-paced environments. In her current role, Renee supports individuals during periods of acute need, working to stabilize situations, reduce risk, and facilitate connections to appropriate services. She collaborates with families and service providers to coordinate timely responses and support continuity of care following crisis. Renee is committed to providing meaningful, responsive support to individuals with ABI during times of crisis.

Day 1: Thursday October 29, 2026 **Rapid Podium Presentations: 1:25 pm – 2:20 pm**
Location: Grand Ballroom

Rapid Podium Presentations are unique, 8 minute-long presentations on an initiative or research with a focus on the key "take-away" messages for the audience. There will be six presentations made during this session.

Rapid Podium Presentation Title #3:
Overdose-Related Brain Injury: Bridging Harm Reduction and Brain Injury Care through Insights from People Who Use Drugs and Caregivers

Presenter:
Liam Michaud PhD(c), York University

Presenter Biography:
Liam Michaud is a community-based qualitative researcher focusing on drug policy and the interface of access to healthcare and the legal environment. He is a PhD candidate at York University, and incoming Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Windsor's Faculty of Law. His research is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. His research is informed by 15 years working in the harm reduction sector, working alongside people who use drugs to develop outreach and overdose prevention programming in residential, street-based, prison, and shelter settings.

Rapid Podium Presentation Title #4:
Examining the Final Discharge Destinations and Health Equity Characteristics of Moderate to Severe Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors

Presenters:
Kassandra Kenyon RN
Lynne Downey MSc. OT, OT Reg (Ont), Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

Presenter Biographies:
Kassandra Kenyon is an Advanced Practice Nurse at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre (SHSC) supporting Trauma Quality Improvement and Neurosurgery Clinical Outreach as a member of the Neurosurgery Education and Outreach Network (NEON). As SHSC is both a neurosurgical centre and a Level 1 trauma centre, Kassandra supports patients with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and other acute brain injuries (ABI) across the continuum of care. She has a strong interest in process and quality improvement, particularly for complex patients with multisystem injuries and those navigating access to specialized services. Kassandra is passionate about high quality patient care and promoting safe, effective transitions through interdisciplinary collaboration and strategic partnerships.

Lynne is an Occupational therapist with 20 years of clinical experience, including seven years in the Tory Trauma Program at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. In this role, she is involved in the assessment, treatment and discharge planning of individuals with acquired brain injuries of varying severity. A key component of her work is advocating for patients to ensure they have access to the services and supports needed to optimize their recovery.
Her clinical experience has fostered a strong interest in quality improvement within the trauma program. Lynne currently serves as co-lead of the Troy Trauma Education Council, where she helps lead quality improvement projects and educational initiatives aimed at enhancing care and supporting best practices across the program.

Day 1: Thursday October 29, 2026 **Rapid Podium Presentations: 1:25 pm – 2:20 pm**
Location: Grand Ballroom

Rapid Podium Presentations are unique, 8 minute-long presentations on an initiative or research with a focus on the key "take-away" messages for the audience. There will be six presentations made during this session.

Rapid Podium Presentation Title #5:
A Legally Informed Decision-Support Tool for At-Risk Discharges in Acquired Brain Injury Rehabilitation

Presenters:
Ami Li MD
Jordan Pelc MD, Sinai Health

Presenter Biographies:
Dr. Ami Li is a Hospitalist and Clinician Investigator at Sinai Health. She earned her MD from the University of Calgary and completed her Family Medicine residency at Women's College Hospital, followed by a clinical fellowship in Hospital Medicine. She holds an MSc in Community Health and Prevention Research from Stanford University, where she was a Knight-Hennessy Scholar, and a Certificate in Innovation and Entrepreneurship from the Stanford Graduate School of Business. In addition, she completed the Machine Learning Software Foundations Certificate at the Data Sciences Institute, University of Toronto. Her research and academic interests include quality improvement, care transitions, and applying machine learning and predictive analytics to guide clinical and operational decisions that enhance quality of care.

Jordan Pelc a hospitalist physician at Sinai Health. He is the Hospital Medicine Director and Medical Informatics Lead for Hennick Bridgepoint Hospital, and an assistant professor in the Temerty Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto.

Rapid Podium Presentation Title #6:
Building Awareness and Service Provider Capacity for Intimate Partner Violence Brain Injury in Canada

Presenter:
Halina (Lin) Haag MSW, RSW, PhD, Wilfrid Laurier University

Presenter Biography:
Dr. Halina (Lin) Haag is a CIHR Fellow and Contract Faculty member with the Faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University. Her research program is focused on the barriers and facilitating factors influencing mental health, return to work, and social integration encountered by women survivors of intimate partner violence-related brain injury (IPV-BI). Lin is committed to improving outcomes through direct practice, innovative research, and professional education, believing that increased knowledge and understanding in the community is key. She is currently a co-principal investigator on a project tasked with developing training and educational resources for key sectors supporting women experiencing IPV-BI such as healthcare, social support services, and the criminal justice system. As part of that project, she has just co-launched the Canadian Centre for Intimate Partner Violence Brain Injury.

Day 1: Thursday October 29, 2026 **Concurrent Session 3A: 2:30 pm – 3:15 pm**
Location: Grand Ballroom

Title:
A Functional Approach to Chronic Pain Management in the ABI Population

Presenters:
Calvin Leung, OT Reg (Ont). Occupational Therapist, FunctionAbility

Presentation Synopsis:
Chronic pain following acquired brain injury (ABI) is a complex and often challenging condition that requires a comprehensive rehabilitation approach. This presentation will explore the role of central sensitization and current neuroscience perspectives in understanding how persistent pain can develop and continue even in the absence of identifiable tissue damage. Participants will learn practical, evidence-based strategies including pain neuroscience education, activity pacing, graded exposure, and interdisciplinary care approaches to support individuals living with chronic pain after ABI. The session will highlight the importance of collaborative rehabilitation models that integrate occupational therapy, psychotherapy, and physiotherapy perspectives to develop individualized, client-centred plans that address the physical, emotional, and functional impacts of chronic pain.

Presenter Biography:
Calvin Leung, MScOT, OT Reg. (Ont.), is an Occupational Therapist based in Toronto with over seven years of clinical experience working with individuals living with chronic pain and acquired brain injuries. He currently practices in the community private sector, with a focus on rehabilitation and return-to-function services within auto insurance and WSIB claims. Calvin is passionate about translating evidence into practical rehabilitation strategies that enhance function, participation, and quality of life.

In addition to his clinical work, Calvin contributes to professional education through guest lecturing at the University of Toronto, McMaster University, and various insurance industry networks. He is committed to advancing interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge sharing within the brain injury and rehabilitation communities. Calvin is honoured to present at the ABI Network Conference and engage with colleagues dedicated to improving outcomes for individuals living with brain injury.

Day 1: Thursday October 29, 2026 **Concurrent Session 3B: 2:30 pm – 3:15 pm**
Location: Bay

Title:
Bridging the Gap After Brain Injury: Expanding the Continuum of Care for Work and Financial Wellbeing

Presenters:
Heather Nuttall, MSW, RSW, Registered Social Worker, OBIA
Zoe Fallis, Occupational Therapist, OT Reg. (Ont.), OBIA

Presentation Synopsis:
Returning to work and achieving financial stability are important goals for many individuals following acquired brain injury (ABI), yet significant gaps remain within the continuum of care. This presentation will explore how community-based, multidisciplinary programs can address unmet needs for individuals who face barriers accessing traditional rehabilitation and employment services. Using the Ontario Brain Injury Association's Return to Work and Life After Impact programs as examples, participants will learn about innovative approaches that incorporate readiness-based planning, employer engagement, individualized supports, wage subsidy strategies, and trauma-informed care. The session will highlight practical strategies to strengthen connections between rehabilitation, community services, and employment sectors while improving access to meaningful work, financial wellbeing, and long-term support for individuals living with ABI.

Presenter Biographies:
Heather Nuttall, MSW, RSW is a Social Worker with Life After Impact at the Ontario Brain Injury Association. She has five years of professional experience in social work and provides trauma-informed, survivor-centered support to individuals impacted by acquired brain injury and gender-based violence. Her practice focuses on the physical, cognitive, and emotional consequences of brain injury within the context of trauma, with an emphasis on system navigation, advocacy, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Heather's professional interests lie at the intersection of brain injury and gender-based violence, particularly in advancing trauma-informed approaches within neurobehavioural rehabilitation.

Zoe Fallis is an Occupational Therapist dedicated to helping people return to work following acquired brain injury (ABI). For the past 13 years, she has worked within the ABI field both in inpatient and outpatient therapy at Toronto Rehab and now at OBIA with the Return to Work Team. Zoe has always been very passionate about education and has been fortunate to share her knowledge as a guest lecturer at University of Toronto within the Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy and through working as a clinical preceptor training future Occupational Therapists. Zoe is deeply committed to supporting education within her profession and ABI community, striving to make a meaningful impact.

Day 1: Thursday October 29, 2026 **Concurrent Session 3C: 2:30 pm – 3:15 pm**
Location: Bay

Title:
How Can We Better Support People with Traumatic Brain Injury after Intimate Partner Violence? Development of a Clinical Practice Guideline and Essential Tools and Resources

Presenters:
Judith Gargaro, BSc, Med, Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, University Health Network
Danielle Toccalino, PhD, PMP, University of Toronto
Halina (Lin) Haag, MSW, RSW, PhD, Wilfrid Laurier University Network

Presentation Synopsis:
Traumatic brain injury (TBI) resulting from intimate partner violence (IPV) is a significant yet often underrecognized public health concern, requiring coordinated, trauma-informed care across healthcare, community, and support sectors. This presentation will introduce the development of the first comprehensive clinical practice guideline for IPV-related TBI, created through collaboration among researchers, clinicians, and individuals with lived experience. Participants will learn about the evidence-informed recommendations, practical tools, and resources designed to improve identification, assessment, care, and support for individuals affected by IPV-TBI. Through a panel discussion, the session will explore strategies for implementing the guideline in practice, strengthening cross-sector collaboration, and advancing accessible, survivor-centred pathways of care.

Presenter Biographies:
Judy Gargaro is the Manager for the Neurotrauma Care Pathways Initiative and was previously the Program Director for the ABI program at the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation (ONF). Judy has been working on the implementation and evaluation of the Neurotrauma Care Pathways with a focus on how best to support persons with a brain and/or spinal cord injury with comorbidities and who have traditionally been under-served by the healthcare system. Other initiatives include developing a Neurotrauma data strategy to assess quality of care, the Provincial TBI Report Card and the implementation of the Standards and Clinical Practice Guidelines for Concussion/Mild Traumatic Brain Injury and for the Rehabilitation of Moderate to Severe Traumatic Brain Injury. In all this work Judy collaborates with administrators, clinicians and policy makers to improve the quality of care available to persons after all severities of neurotrauma.

Danielle Toccalino

Dr. Halina (Lin) Haag is a CIHR Fellow and Contract Faculty member with the Faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University. Her research program is focused on the barriers and facilitating factors influencing mental health, return to work, and social integration encountered by women survivors of intimate partner violence-related brain injury (IPV-BI). Lin is committed to improving outcomes through direct practice, innovative research, and professional education, believing that increased knowledge and understanding in the community is key. She is currently a co-principal investigator on a project tasked with developing training and educational resources for key sectors supporting women experiencing IPV-BI such as healthcare, social support services, and the criminal justice system. As part of that project, she has just co-launched the Canadian Centre for Intimate Partner Violence Brain Injury.

Day 1: Thursday October 29, 2026 **Keynote Address: 3:45 pm – 4:45 pm**
Location: Grand Ballroom

Title:

Project-Based Intervention: A Practical Solution for Delivering Evidence-Based Rehabilitation in Real-Life Contexts

Presenter:

Deidre (Dee) Sperry MSc, S-LP Reg. CASLPO Reg. NLCHP
Assistant Clinical Professor (Part Time), School of Rehabilitation Science, Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University

Presentation Synopsis:

Success after brain injury is measured not by isolated tasks, but by meaningful participation in everyday life. Yet translating evidence-based rehabilitation into real-world contexts remains a persistent clinical challenge. Project-based intervention offers a practical way forward by organizing therapy around sustained, goal-directed projects that unfold over time. This approach provides the external structure needed to support performance, reveal breakdowns, and integrate cognitive, physical, and psychosocial skills often treated separately.

While not a new concept, knowing how to select and shape the right project for each individual can be challenging. Using case-based examples, this session will demonstrate how project-based intervention is developed and can be applied across rehabilitation settings to operationalize interdisciplinary real-world rehabilitation that is meaningful, measurable and memorable

Presenter Biography:

Deidre Sperry is a Speech-Language Pathologist with more than 30 years of experience in community rehabilitation with people living with acquired brain injury. She works primarily in private practice and also serves as a Part-Time Assistant Clinical Professor in the School of Rehabilitation Science at McMaster University. Dee was recently awarded the Eve Kassirer Lifetime Achievement Award by Speech-Language & Audiology Canada (SAC) in recognition of her contributions to the profession. Through her work with rehabilitation teams across Canada, particularly in Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador, Dee has helped clinicians bridge the gap between evidence-based practice and the realities of everyday life through practical, project-based approaches to cognitive rehabilitation that improve participation and quality of life.

Day 2: Friday October 30, 2026 **Keynote Address: 9:00 am – 10:00 am**
Location: Grand Ballroom

Title:
Enhancing the Precision and Effectiveness of Cognitive Rehabilitation by Applying the RTSS Framework

Presenter:
Dr. McKay Moore Sohlberg PhD, CCC-SLP, ASHA Fellow
Professor of Communication Disorders and Sciences at the University of Oregon

Presentation Synopsis:
Cognitive rehabilitation after brain injury is fundamental to recovery. It is complicated in that it is delivered by a diverse set of professional disciplines and community service providers. Additionally, cognitive rehabilitation requires knowledge and skills in the areas of cognitive processing, physical states, and psychosocial functioning, as well as behavior change, adaptation and resilience. Historically there has been inconsistent delivery and a lack of understanding of the field by stakeholders including patients and families receiving services, providers, researchers and funders.

This presentation reviews several key evolutions in the field including the updated rehabilitation framework, The Rehabilitation Treatment and Specification System (RTSS). The RTSS was developed to increase precision and communication in the delivery of rehabilitation. In this presentation, the RTSS framework will be applied to the delivery of the most common rehabilitation approach, the selection and training of cognitive strategies and external aids.

Learning Objectives:
- Describe key evolutions in brain injury rehabilitation in the last decade,
- Describe reasons why improved specification of rehabilitation interventions is imperative to improve rehabilitation services and bridge the gap between research and practice,
- Demonstrate how to apply the RTSS to common cognitive rehabilitation practices.

Presenter Biography:
McKay Moore Sohlberg is a Professor Emerita of Communication Disorders and Sciences at the University of Oregon, where she has taught, conducted research, and provided clinical training in neurorehabilitation since 1994. Dr. Sohlberg is internationally recognized for her pioneering work in cognitive rehabilitation. She has published three seminal textbooks in the field along with numerous research articles. Her research focuses on developing and evaluating treatments that help individuals with acquired brain injury manage cognitive-communication impairments and achieve meaningful improvements in their daily lives. A recent focus has been evaluating the impact of positive therapeutic alliance on cognitive treatment outcomes.

Day 2: Friday October 30, 2026 **Concurrent Session 4A: 10:30 am – 11:15 am**
Location: York AB

Title:
Beyond Accessibility: Clinical Decision-Making for Housing Accommodations in Acquired Brain Injury

Presenter:
Alicia Kralt, BSc, MSc (OT), OT Reg (Ont). Occupational Therapist, FunctionAbility

Presentation Synopsis:
Housing accommodations for individuals with acquired brain injury (ABI) require more than a focus on physical accessibility. Cognitive, behavioural, and functional impairments can significantly influence safety and independence within the home, making thoughtful clinical decision-making essential. Through practical case examples, this presentation will introduce a collaborative framework for developing safe, functional, and sustainable housing recommendations. Participants will gain practical strategies to recognize potential risks, avoid unintended consequences, and support successful community living for individuals with ABI.

Presenter Biography:
Alicia Kralt is an Occupational Therapist working in the private practice (MVC) field for over 15 years. Throughout my practice, I have taken an interest in the rehabilitation and creation of accessible environments for individuals with complex orthopedic injuries, spinal cord injuries and brain injuries. From short term to long term adaptations, I have consulted and managed a variety of projects including retrofitting of current homes, purchasing homes to modify, and sourcing existing accessible homes. I have completed my Executive Certificate in Home Modifications from the University of Southern California, completed the Universal Design in Home Modifications Course through the University of Buffalo's Centre for Inclusive Design, as well as the Adaptive Home Renovation Course through the Canadian Home Builder's Association. With this education and experience I complete specialized Occupational Therapy Home Modification Assessments in collaboration with contractor partners.

Day 2: Friday October 30, 2026 **Concurrent Session 4B: 10:30 am – 11:15 am**
Location: Bay

Title:
Enhancing Access to Bail Support in Ontario: a Focus on Navigation for Women with Brain Injury

Presenters:
Flora Matheson PhD, Director of Programs, Unity Health Toronto
Arthur McLuhan MA, Unity Health Toronto
Lucy Gudgeon, Director of Programs, Elizabeth Fry Society Toronto

Presentation Synopsis:
Women with brain injury are disproportionately represented in Ontario's criminal-legal system and often face significant challenges navigating the bail process. This presentation introduces the Brain Injury Bail Navigation Program, an innovative initiative designed to improve access to justice and connect women with brain injury to essential health, disability, housing, and community supports. Participants will gain an overview of the program, learn about preliminary quantitative and qualitative findings, and explore how targeted navigation services can help address systemic barriers and improve outcomes for women involved in the bail system.

Presenter Biographies:
Dr. Flora Matheson is a Scientist and Unity Health Toronto Chair in Homelessness, Housing, and Health. A sociologist of crime, deviance and socio-legal studies, she conducts community-based research with a sex and gendered lens and focus on supporting people affected by the criminal-legal system with histories of brain injury and cognitive-communication challenges.

Dr. Arthur McLuhan is a Senior Research Associate and Adjunct Scientist at MAP Centre for Urban Health Solutions, St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto. A sociologist of culture and interaction, his research focuses on the patterns of interaction that shape involvements, identities, and inequities. One of his current projects is a study exploring the challenges of community supervision conditions among people with a history of brain injury.

Lucy Gudgeon is the Director of Programs at Elizabeth Fry Toronto, where she leads the development and delivery of community-based initiatives for women and gender-diverse people affected by the justice system. Her works centres on the design and implementation of evidence-informed, equity-oriented interventions that address systemic barriers and support effective reintegration and long-term well-being outcomes.

Day 2: Friday October 30, 2026 **Concurrent Session 4C: 10:30 am – 11:15 am**
Location: Grand Ballroom

Title:
Beyond the Mandate: Simple Tools for Responding to Crisis and Suicidality in ABI Clients

Presenters:
Eden Dales BA, MSW, RSW, Eden Dales Social Work
Uri Carmel-Kraiem MSW, RSW

Presentation Synopsis:
Responding to suicidal thoughts in individuals with acquired brain injury (ABI) can be challenging, particularly for providers without formal crisis training. This practical session equips participants with simple, evidence-informed tools to recognize early signs of distress, respond with confidence, and support client safety within their professional scope. Grounded in trauma-informed care and the neurobiology of stress, the presentation introduces a structured framework for communication, safety planning, documentation, and decision-making, helping providers navigate difficult situations while fostering collaboration, connection, and coordinated care.

Presenter Biographies:
Eden Dales is a Registered Social Worker and the founder and Clinical Director of Eden Dales Social Work, a trauma-focused rehabilitation practice serving individuals and families across Ontario. With over 20 years of clinical experience, she specializes in acquired brain injury, concussion rehabilitation, traumatic stress, grief, suicidality, and trauma-informed care. She provides post-trauma psychotherapy to individuals and families. Eden has presented provincially, nationally, and internationally on brain injury, trauma, and recovery, including through the International Brain Injury Association. She developed a Law Society of Ontario-accredited trauma-informed care program for legal professionals and regulators and provides education on trauma-informed communication in high-stakes environments. She has prepared trauma-informed guidelines for sexual assault and other high-profile trauma proceedings and provided crisis support to survivors and families throughout court proceedings. In 2025, she received the Ontario Brain Injury Association Health Care Provider of the Year Award.

Uri Carmel-Kraiem is a Registered Social Worker and psychotherapist with over 15 years of experience providing trauma-informed psychotherapy to individuals, couples, and families. He specializes in the assessment and treatment of PTSD, complex trauma, grief, suicidality, psychiatric crises, and adjustment following life-altering injuries, including acquired brain injury and motor vehicle collisions. He also has extensive experience preparing psychosocial and medico-legal reports related to trauma and post-injury loss. Uri's clinical approach integrates EMDR, Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), Narrative Therapy, attachment-based interventions, and trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy (TF-CBT), in which he holds certification. He has extensive experience supporting individuals and families affected by trauma, self-harm, suicide risk, and suicide loss.
Uri’s previous research examined how parents and siblings construct meaning following a suicide death, work that continues to inform his trauma-attuned, family-centered approach to care.

Day 2: Friday October 30, 2026 **Keynote Address: 12:45 pm – 1:45 pm**
Location: Grand Ballroom

Title:
The Importance of Choices

Presenter:
Dean Wardak, Motivational Speaker; Director, Tamara Gordon Foundation, Patient Partner, EMPaCT, Women's College Hospital, Brain Injury Survivor and Inspirational Speaker

Presentation Synopsis:
The choices made by support workers, healthcare providers, caregivers, and even patients/clients directly shape the quality of life experienced by those living with brain injuries and other complex conditions. Every interaction—every word, gesture, or effort—contributes to that outcome. In this presentation, Dean illustrates how seemingly small decisions made in communication, attitude, and approach can transform the care experience and profoundly influence a person's wellbeing.

Learning Objectives:
By the end of the presentation:

- For Healthcare Providers and Caregivers

Participants will understand how small, intentional adjustments in how they support and communicate with patients/clients can lead to meaningful improvements in therapeutic relationships and outcomes. Drawing from Dean's lived experience, they will learn how choosing respect, humility, dedication, and compassion fosters trust, strengthens collaboration, and enhances the overall quality of care.

- For Patients/Clients

Participants will gain practical strategies they can use to build and strengthen relationships with healthcare professionals, family members, and caregivers. Through Dean's story, they will see how daily choices—both big and small—can shape their journey and help them create a fulfilling and beautiful life, even while living with a brain injury.

Presenter Biography:
Dean suffered his brain injury in 2011 in a car accident. Since the accident, Dean graduated from college with high honours and from university with Magna Cum Laude. Dean started his motivational speaking career in 2012 and has given over 100 presentations during this time. Dean sits on the Board of Directors for the Tamara Gordon Foundation, a charity that awards scholarships to students with physical disabilities who are attending post-secondary school. Dean is a patient partner on EMPaCT, a patient-engagement team organized through Women's College Hospital trying to make healthcare more equitable through the lived experiences of people.

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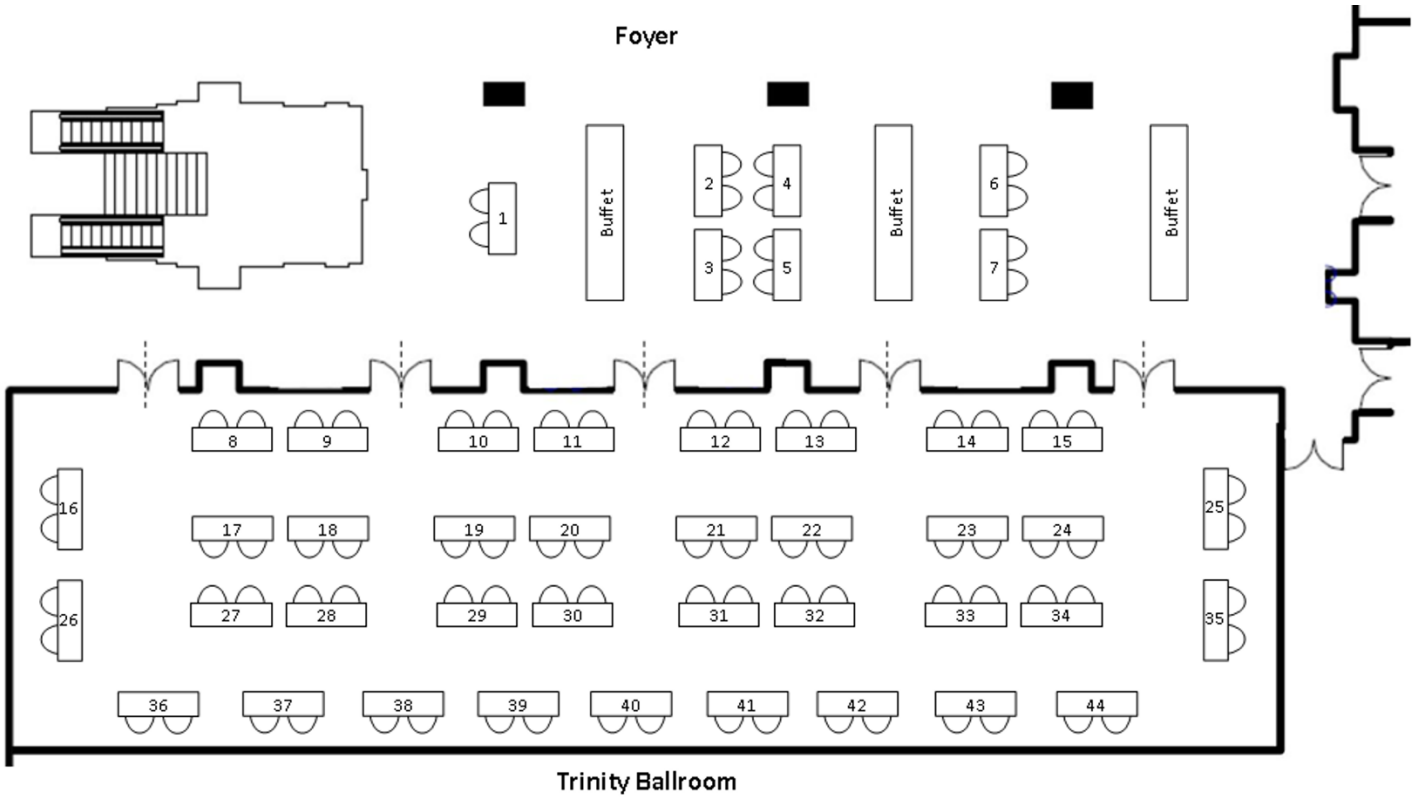
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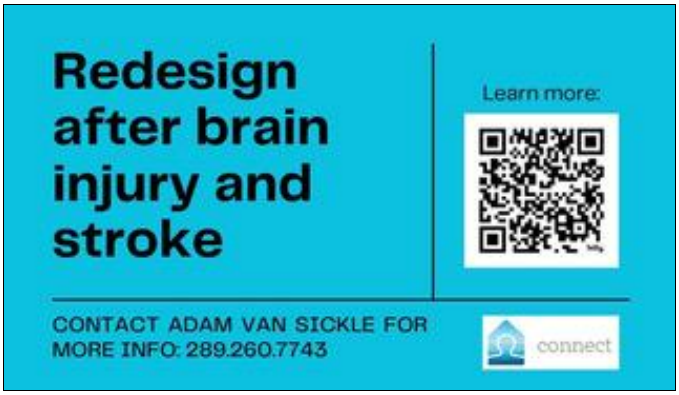
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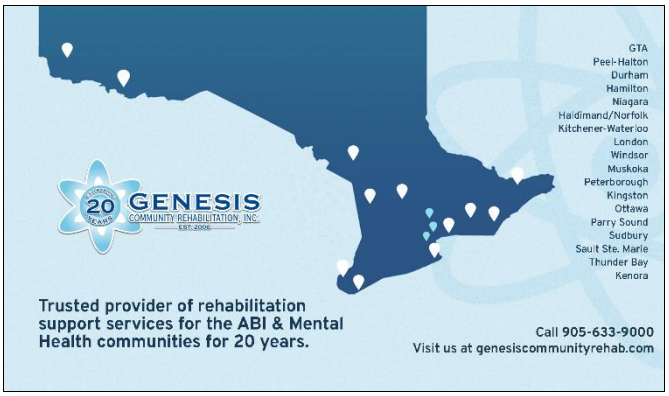
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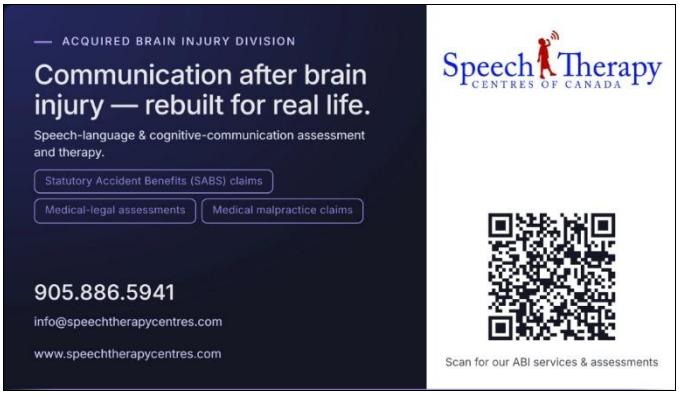

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