



**BRAIN INJURY
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No Brain Injury is
Too Mild to Ignore,
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Focus on TBI Model Systems in New Jersey: Northern New Jersey Traumatic Brain Injury System (NNJTBIS)

By Keith Cicerone, PhD

The Northern New Jersey Traumatic Brain Injury System (NNJTBIS) has previously been designated by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) as a TBI Model System and is proposing an innovative proposal to continue that distinction. The NNJTBIS serves the Northern and Central New Jersey catchment areas, an ethnically diverse 13 county region of 6.5 million persons. The NNJTBIS is a cooperative effort of the Kessler Medical Rehabilitation Research and Education Center (KMRREC), the Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation (KIR), and trauma centers from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey – The New Jersey Medical School (UMDNJ-NJMS), Hackensack University Hospital, Morristown Memorial Hospital and St. Joseph’s Hospital. KIR has been providing a comprehensive continuum of state-of-the-art rehabilitation care for persons with traumatic brain injury (TBI) since 1980 and has collaborated with KMRREC in the conduct of TBI research, including clinical trials and the analysis of standardized data.

Approximately 170 newly injured persons with traumatic brain injury are admitted each year to our system of care. We expect to enroll at least 60 patients per year who meet TBIMS national database criteria and meet or exceed benchmarks for TBIMS enrollment, missing data and follow-up rates. Consumer participation and input through consumer consultants, as well as the TBI Community Advisory Board has been integrated into the entire proposal from the onset of the planning process.

In this project, the NNJTBIS proposes both a site-specific research study and a collaborative research module that address key issues outlined in the “Health and Function” section of the NIDRR Long Range Plan (2005-2009). These projects, both related to ongoing NIH-funded studies, will contribute to evidence-based rehabilitation interventions and quality of life measurement to improve the lives of individuals with TBI, as follows:

- An innovative, double-blinded, randomized controlled trial of a cognitive rehabilitation intervention utilizing a proven methodology shown to be effective with the multiple sclerosis population;
- A collaborative module that will adapt, develop, and validate an innovative quality-of-life outcome measurement system for use in TBI intervention research.

Each of these projects has been subjected to initial pilot testing to assure the applicability and feasibility of the methodology. The evaluation of this project is guided by a multifaceted approach, which uses a highly



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quantifiable, objective means of evaluating progress. This will be supplemented by our Community Advisory Board, NNJTBIS Steering Committee and an external Scientific Advisory Board, which will provide feedback on a quarterly, annual and bi-annual basis, respectively. In addition, project management staff will meet internally on a regular basis to review data management and data quality issues and assure effective communication with KIR and staff from the trauma centers.

Finally, the NNJTBIS will coordinate with the NIDRR-funded Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center at the University of Washington to provide scientific results and information for dissemination to clinical and consumer audiences. To complement this, we will continue to develop our TBI website at www.kmrrec.org, to include a variety of professional and consumer-oriented information related to TBI.

Additional methods of research dissemination include KMRREC and KIR-hosted consumer and professional conferences, consumer newsletters, publications, and scientific presentations.

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