



# The Sibley Report

December 2001

... the place to find valuable information to help make your job - and your life easier! If you have a topic idea or any other suggestions, please give our Editor - Angie Catenaro - a call. Sibley & Associates is a national disability management firm with a decade of experience, nearly 200 healthcare professionals and state-of-the-art technology. Our customers benefit from all the advantages a large company has to offer...while also benefiting from the "small business" customer service philosophy of our dedicated Insurance Services Division.

# Sibley

& ASSOCIATES INC.

Steve Sibley  
President & C.E.O.  
Jim Richings  
Vice-President, Operations  
Cam Lowther  
Vice-President, Sales and Marketing

3027 Harvester Road, Suite 401  
Burlington, Ontario L7N 3G7

Tel: 905-633-7800 or  
1-800-363-8900  
Fax: 905-633-7900

## How is Brain Injury Severity Measured?

Head injuries often occur as the result of motor vehicle accidents. Unfortunately, head injuries can also result in injury to the brain with varying degrees of severity. The severity of a brain injury is measured by the following assessments:

### Loss of Consciousness (LOC)

- The duration and extent of the patient's impairment of consciousness could be a characteristic of major importance in evaluating the severity of the closed head injury and in predicting eventual outcomes.
- "Coma" is the failure of the patient to exhibit vocal responses or carry out purposeful motor activity after verbal or somatic stimulation by the examiner.

### Retrograde Amnesia (RA)

- A specific impairment of memory for events that were experienced immediately before a brain injury.
- A long period of RA is generally an indication of severe or extensive brain damage, however, it is also occasionally seen that a mild head injury may trigger the onset of RA that is grossly disproportionate to the degree of trauma.
- RA may occur without LOC.

### Post Traumatic Amnesia (PTA)

- Inability of brain injured patients to form new memories, as well as disorientation for a particular period after they recover consciousness.
- Excellent indicator of the severity of a closed head injury and the eventual prognosis of recovery of cognitive functioning.
- Must also take patient's age into account with the PTA (i.e., older patients have longer period of PTA).

Traumatic brain injury can occur without any loss of consciousness or post-traumatic amnesia. Conversely, unconsciousness does not necessarily result in brain damage. It has been studied that the damaged brain has some capacity to recover from injury, although the mechanisms whereby the recovery occurs are still poorly understood. In part, the process is thought to occur through the utilization of alternate nerve pathways in the brain.

Improvement following brain injuries can be seen for as long as two years or more following an injury, although the greatest recovery occurs in the first six months.

*See attachment for how mild, moderate, and severe brain injuries are measured, as well as a copy of the Glasgow Coma Scale.*

sibley@sibley.ca  
www.sibley.ca