

Cognitive-Communication Ability and Social Functioning following Traumatic Brain Injury

Abstract

Our ability to interact appropriately in everyday interpersonal situations is fundamental to successful social integration. Impaired cognitive-communication ability correlates significantly and substantially with indices of social function across several domains for adults with acquired neurological disorders. In particular, evidence supports the negative impact of these impairments on the development and maintenance of relationships and community integration more generally.

Cognitive-communication competence sits in a complex, multifactorial space characterised by interacting associations with cognitive and psychological functions and social and environmental parameters. This complexity is evident in much of the research seeking to understand the nature and magnitude of interactions between communication competence and social outcomes in adults with acquired neurological disorders.

Over recent years our understanding of the impact of cognitive-communication impairments on social outcome has benefited substantially from inclusion of the insider's perspective in our research evidence base. Indeed, a methodological inclusion of constructivist paradigms has enabled the development of a rich understanding of the devastating social impact of impaired functional communication competence.

The aim of this presentation is to review cognitive-communication impairment in the context of traumatic brain injury (TBI) and detail its impact on social functioning from the perspectives of people with TBI and their intimate partners/spouses and friends. With these perspectives as background, this presentation concludes with consideration of current practice guidelines, therapeutic developments and a brief look at a novel interventions designed to reduce the negative impact of cognitive-communication deficits on social functioning following TBI.

Brief Bio: Emeritus Professor Jacinta Douglas

Jacinta is Emeritus Professor and holds the Summer Foundation Research Chair on Living Well with Brain Injury in the Living with Disability Research Centre at La Trobe University, in Melbourne, Australia. She has qualifications in the disciplines of speech pathology, clinical psychology and neuropsychology and has extensive research and clinical experience in the rehabilitation of adults with acquired brain injury. Jacinta is a Fellow of the Australasian Society for the Study of Brain Impairment and the Speech Pathology Association of Australia. She has authored more than 180 peer reviewed journal publications and 14 book chapters and has delivered numerous keynote and invited presentations and professional workshops nationally and internationally.

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