



TBI News & Views

A publication of the Northern New Jersey Traumatic Brain Injury System

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

Save A Brain: Sharing Education and Resources from One Traumatic Brain Injury Survivor to Thousands

By Jacqueline Leddy, Research Coordinator, Center for Traumatic Brain Injury Research at Kessler Foundation

The Utah-based nonprofit organization Save A Brain is quickly growing a follower base of more than 4,300 followers on Instagram as Founder Kelsey Boyer gains awareness as a resource for fellow brain injury survivors. In May 2020, Kelsey established Save A Brain Inc. with a mission to provide education, encourage prevention, and spread awareness of the long-term mental and physical effects of traumatic brain injury (TBI) and concussions.

Snowboarding has been, and still is, a huge part of Kelsey’s life. She grew up in rural Pennsylvania before moving out west to chase bigger mountains and more snow. “I was competing with high hopes of going to the Olympics. I sustained about eight concussions over a two-month period and my brain started bleeding, but I had no idea,” said Kelsey. She recalled that all the doctors she saw just said, “You’re fine, you’re fine.” But she was not fine.

Her friends became concerned and finally took her to the emergency room for a computed tomography (CT) scan. Afterward, she received her diagnosis: a subdural hematoma, which had been bleeding for about two weeks, and her brain had shifted 11 millimeters. The care team recommended emergency brain surgery.

Kelsey discussed how unprepared she was upon leaving the ICU after surgery. She was discharged with little information or warning about the debilitating symptoms she subsequently experienced, including mood swings, trouble sleeping, and problems with eye function.

Because of her experience, she now uses the Save A Brain website as a platform to advocate for and inform other survivors about daily steps they can take to encourage brain health and overall well-being. The website highlights helmet safety and offers a free recovery toolbox as well as information about treatment centers, yoga, meditation programs, and a concussion cookbook. One of Save A Brain’s long-term programs, **Happy Helmets**, donates new helmets to local charities, schools, and youth programs, selecting a new helmet sponsor and donor each month.



Kelsey Boyer, founder of the nonprofit Save A Brain, spreads awareness of the long-term mental and physical effects of traumatic brain injury and concussions.

Three months post-surgery, Kelsey got back on her snowboard, but experienced flashbacks, which forced her to stop. She took a break, wondering if she would ever be able to continue the sport. With the help of treatments like psychotherapy, meditation, and yoga, she has since made a strong comeback and snowboards daily. She is once again chasing powder, riding through trees, and helping women riders gain confidence and skills on the mountain.

To learn more and listen to Kelsey’s story, visit saveabraininc.com. ■



RESOURCE REFRESH

Enhanced Programs in Safety, Education, Aquatic Therapy, and Adaptive Yoga Help Brain Injury Patients Improve Functional Mobility

By Mary-Kate Matozzo, PT, DPT at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation – Marlton, Brain Injury Program

The Brain Injury Program at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation – Marlton adds beneficial elements focusing on brain injury therapy.

The Marlton, NJ, campus of Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, a Select Medical inpatient rehabilitation hospital, serves the Southern New Jersey and Greater Philadelphia areas. In 2019, Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation – Marlton initiated the transition of a 14-bed unit for individuals admitted with a diagnosis of brain injury.

In collaboration with Kessler Institute’s Northern New Jersey campuses, the Brain Injury Program at Marlton, NJ, has successfully implemented several beneficial elements focusing on brain injury therapy. One key element is a Safety Coach program designed for appropriate levels of activity and socialization that enhances patient protection.

Other new practices include interdisciplinary behavior rounds to meet patient-specific needs and formal education sessions for patients and caregivers.

A unique highlight of Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation – Marlton’s Brain Injury Program includes an on-site heated pool where patients participate in aquatic therapy with physical and occupational therapists. Aquatic therapy has increased patient engagement in the rehabilitation program.

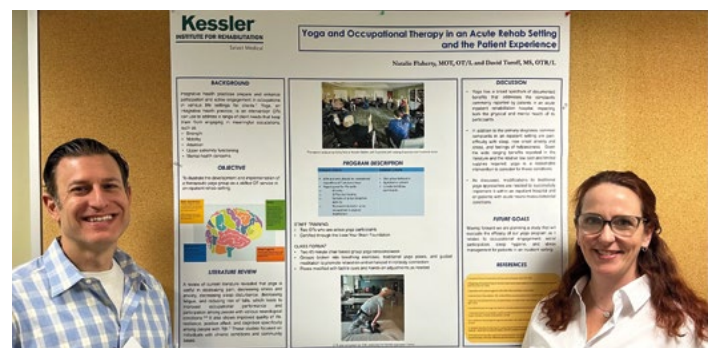
Sessions of adaptive yoga and meditation offer additional ways patients can work toward improved functional mobility. Two LoveYourBrain-certified yoga instructors lead the adaptive yoga program: Ada Natalie Flaherty, MOT, OT/L, and Dave Turoff, MS, OTR/L. Adaptive yoga incorporates breathing as well as upper and lower body exercises (yoga poses), coordinated breath control, visualization techniques, and guided meditation. Patients benefit from this program with improved body awareness, sensation, balance and coordination, stress management, and better sleep habits.

Last year, Natalie and Dave presented a poster entitled, “Yoga and Occupational Therapy in an Acute Rehab Setting and the

Patient Experience,” at the New Jersey Occupational Therapy Association 2022 Annual Conference. In May 2023, Natalie will present “Yoga as a Skilled Intervention in Acute Rehab Post Brain Injury” at the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey annual conference. Natalie’s 75-minute presentation will be available online and for continuing education credits.

Moreover, in 2023, Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation – Marlton is moving forward with structured implementation of a high-intensity gait-training program for patients with acquired brain injury. A team of physical therapists from the Marlton campus has been accepted to attend the Academy of Neurological Physical Therapy’s Knowledge Translation Summit in September 2023 in conjunction with this gait-training project.

Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation – Marlton plans to continue expanding its Brain Injury Program through increased participation in research opportunities, education, and engagement as well as ongoing collaboration with Kessler Institute’s Northern New Jersey campuses. ■



Dave Turoff and Ada Natalie Flaherty, LoveYourBrain-certified yoga instructors, lead the adaptive yoga program at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation—Marlton’s Brain Injury Program.

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EXPERT OUTLOOK

The MSKTC: A Valuable Resource in a TBI Survivor's Journey

By Jean Lengenfelder, PhD, Associate Director, Neuropsychology Research, and Erica Weber, PhD, Research Scientist, Center for Traumatic Brain Injury Research at Kessler Foundation

Finding valuable information about your traumatic brain injury (TBI) can be challenging and time-consuming. Where can you locate easy-to-understand TBI materials? How do you know the information you've found is correct and up to date?

The Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center (MSKTC) is a national center that works to review the latest research and create useful tools for TBI. The MSKTC is a trusted, leading source for up-to-date TBI research and resources for individuals with TBI and their families. The center's website provides free materials in English and Spanish available as printable PDF documents, videos, fact sheets, slideshows, podcasts, and even infocomics.

The MSKTC also directly involves individuals with TBI and their families to serve as ambassadors to help develop and review content for new resources. Ambassadors also help by spreading the word to increase the use of resources so many more people can benefit from the information.

The MSKTC is operated by the American Institute for Research (AIR) and is funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR). The MSKTC works with the 16 TBI Model Systems across the U.S., including the Northern New Jersey Traumatic Brain Injury Model System, a collaborative project of Kessler Foundation, Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, and five local trauma centers. In addition to its work in TBI, MSKTC is also the center for information related to spinal cord injury and burn injury. ■

A sampling of topics on the MSKTC website include:



Physical Health

- Balance Problems
- Sleep
- Chronic Pain
- Spasticity



Cognitive & Emotional Health

- Memory Problems
- Depression
- Cognitive and Emotional Problems
- Stress Management



Daily Functioning

- Driving
- Parenting with a TBI
- Returning to School
- Relationships



Access Traumatic
Brain Injury Resources  MSKTC.org
SCI • TBI • BURN



For more information, visit msktc.org.

NNJTBIS

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Kessler Foundation
120 Eagle Rock Avenue
East Hanover, NJ 07936-3147

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TBI News & Views is published tri-annually by the Northern New Jersey Traumatic Brain Injury Model System (NNJTBIS) for people with traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and their families. The NNJTBIS is funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research (grant #90DPTB0032) and is a collaborative effort of Kessler Foundation, Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, University Hospital, Hackensack University Medical Center, St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center, and Morristown Medical Center.

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TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY FACT SHEETS

The Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center summarizes cognitive problems that can occur after TBI in their fact sheets. They can be found by scanning the QR code on the right.



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Volunteers are the heart of research.

Kessler Foundation research helps people with disabilities live better lives.

Join our research studies at [KesslerFoundation.org/join](https://www.KesslerFoundation.org/join)

