

## Personal Perspective: Succeeding in School after Brain Injury: The power of determination and a strong support system

Laura Harrington was a high school junior in 1997, and a super athlete on the verge of receiving a Division I college scholarship. She excelled in track, field hockey, and her favorite sport—basketball—where she played guard. By sophomore year, Laura was already being courted by various Division I schools throughout the country for her athletic prowess in multiple sports.

She had become the top field hockey goalie in the county in her first year of play, and that same year, was promoted to the varsity track team, also a new sport for Lauren. Her achievements weren't only limited to the track, field, or basketball court. Laura, a member of the National Honor Society, was also one of the top five students in her class, choosing to skip lunch just so she could take another class instead.

On the night of January 4th, the 17-year-old was involved in a car accident that changed her life. Driving home from a friend's house, Laura lost control of her car on the slick roads and struck a tree. Concerned that their daughter hadn't made it home for dinner, Laura's parents called her friend's father, who headed out to look for her, and came upon the accident about a mile away from their home. Badly injured, Laura was medevacked to Morristown Memorial Hospital where she spent 10 days in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), followed by a week in the

respiratory ICU. Laura continued her recovery at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation in Chester, NJ, Children's Specialized Hospital in Mountainside, NJ, and several subacute facilities. Later in her recovery, she participated in brain injury research studies at Kessler Foundation.



Laura, now 37 years old, has faced many setbacks throughout her journey to recovery. Due to traumatic brain injury, she was unresponsive for five months following her accident. During those first few months, a severe episode of pneumonia almost took her life. Her parents, Ken and Karen, did everything they could, including advocating aggressively for Laura during her recovery. But it was nine months before they saw any improvement in her alertness.

First, they noticed her eyes started to track the words of the comic strips her aunt would read aloud to her. Then, during a weekend visit home, the Harrington family experienced a real breakthrough. Laura's father took a chance and placed a single piece of puff cereal in Laura's mouth, and watched in amazement as she began to move her tongue and eating cereal. Two weeks before Thanksgiving, Laura was watching TV with her father, when she spoke her first word since the accident: "Dad." Ken and Karen, stunned, tried to get Laura to say "Dad" again, but would have to wait another hour before she was able to repeat it. A week later, after days of silence, Laura spontaneously started to read the sign on the wall in her room, "Please wear protective gloves when handling patients." The family was excited to see these encouraging signs.

Two years after her injury, Laura was able to live at home with her parents again. At age 19, the local high school began providing her with nightly in-home tutoring

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services. At age 21, Laura graduated from high school, and immediately enrolled at Sussex County Community College (SCCC) where she took one course every semester. Laura attended night classes with either her mother or father, who would take notes and transcribe them to help her study.

Ken and Karen credit Laura's success in college to the effective accommodations she received, and the dedicated instructors who supported her desire to learn. She was given the opportunity to take tests at home and was allowed to reference her notes and textbooks. While acknowledging her need for assistance, SCCC required Laura to do all of the work herself. She received mostly A's during her ten years at SCCC – that's how long it took Laura to complete the 60 credits for an associate degree in liberal arts. In May of 2012, Laura walked onstage at Sussex County Community College to accept her hard-earned diploma.

Laura works one day a week at United Way, a non-profit organization, where it is now her turn to help an employee who needs accommodations. Laura takes

notes and types them up for her co-worker, who coincidentally, was a classmate in her public speaking course at SCCC. Having overcome many obstacles, both are applying their education to finding fulfillment in the workplace.

True to her athletic spirit, when asked what she hoped to accomplish in the near future, Laura said, "I want to run." Having overcome so many challenges, Laura's family is ready to support her as she works toward her next goal. As her gait and balance continue to improve, Ken and Karen continue to hope that one day, she'll achieve her dream.



As portrayed in Laura Harrington's Personal Perspective, returning to school after a traumatic brain injury presents many challenges, but with appropriate support from educators and caregivers, students can achieve success. This Fact Sheet from the Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems describes how to plan for returning to school, how school systems can support students with TBI, options for classroom placement, and managing behavior issues in the classroom.

Read more about returning to school with TBI, or other TBI Model Systems fact sheets containing useful information for families and people with TBI by visiting: <http://www.msktc.org/tbi/factsheets>, or scanning the QR code.



**TBI News & Views** is published semi-annually by the Northern New Jersey Traumatic Brain Injury Model System (NNJT BIS) for people with traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and their families. The NNJT BIS is funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research (grant #H133A120030) and is a collaborative effort of Kessler Foundation, Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, University Hospital, Hackensack University Medical Center, St. Joseph's Regional Medical Center, Morristown Medical Center, and Jersey City Medical Center.

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# ASK THE EXPERT:

## An Interview with Tom Grady, Advocate for People with Brain Injury

*TBI News & Views* talked with Grady about his role at the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey, known as The Alliance – the primary source of information, advocacy, and support for people with brain injury and their families in New Jersey. Grady has been with the group since 2002.

### **Q: What motivates you to serve the community of people affected by brain injury?**

A: Brain injury has had a personal impact on me. When I was 10 years old, I had a ruptured cerebral arteriovenous malformation that required two brain surgeries. I was exceptionally fortunate to survive without major disabilities. Given my good fortune, I think it is imperative that I “pay-it-forward” to help others with brain injury. Many people are not as fortunate as I. It is very humbling.



**Tom Grady, MPA** is Director of Advocacy and Public Affairs at the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey.

### **Q: What are some of the lessons you have learned about being an effective advocate?**

A: First and foremost, listening to people impacted by brain injury is important to effectively determine their needs. A broad network of resources is vital. Depending upon the need, I may turn to Alliance staff, elected officials, other association professionals, etc., to put together a team that can fulfill the person’s needs. Lastly, educating advocates to effectively communicate is imperative. For some affected by brain injury, communication—whether verbal or written—is compromised. Their advocates must know how to help them communicate, or do so on their behalf.

### **Q: What types of activities are you involved in?**

A: My job is multifaceted. I am the acting chair and staff liaison to the Alliance’s Advocacy & Public Affairs Committee, and co-chair of the United States Brain Injury Alliance’s Public Policy Committee. Through these channels, I work on behalf of The Alliance to advance public policy here in New Jersey that prioritizes the needs of individuals affected by brain injury, including caregivers.

I also serve as staff liaison to the Council for the Head Injured Community (CHIC), which is one of the Alliance’s key advocacy committees. CHIC’s mission is to champion and publicize the advocacy, rights, and needs of people who have survived brain injury. CHIC also educates the brain injury community through its ‘Mike-at-the-Mike’ sessions, which engage members of the audience with a panel of experts to explore various topics related to living with brain injury. ‘Mike-at-the-Mic’ ([bit.ly/2tlksf7-MAM](https://bit.ly/2tlksf7-MAM)) has been a popular feature of the Foundation’s TBI consumer conferences.



Scan QR code to listen to ‘Mike-at-the-Mic’

At the Alliance’s annual seminar, I provide advocacy and public policy counsel to our Concussion in Sports Committee, assist people with their concerns and work to engage them in the community, and provide individual guidance on how to advocate effectively.

### **Q: What are some of the accomplishments of these advocacy efforts?**

A: Some successful efforts include ensuring the inclusion of brain injury services in state budgets, supporting passage of the National Pediatric Acquired Brain Injury Plan Act, and creating the New Jersey Special Education & Traumatic Brain Injury Task Force. We also have successfully advocated for youth safety measures, including strengthening helmet requirements for various sports. In fact, New Jersey was the first state to require that youth under age 18 wear helmets while skiing.

### **Q: What advice would you give to those who want to get involved in advocacy activities?**

A: Be goal-oriented, know what you want to accomplish, and why. This is the first step, and it is crucial. Please contact me at [tgrady@bianj.org](mailto:tgrady@bianj.org).

# Caregiver Corner: A Mother's Journey

*In this column, Denise Sharkey shares her family's journey with her son, Christopher Sharkey, who sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI) as well as numerous physical disabilities after being involved in a motor vehicle accident at age 23.*

In 2006, Christopher Sharkey was a 23-year-old graduate student living on his own when he was in a motor vehicle accident. He sustained numerous injuries, including a traumatic brain injury (TBI). After seven weeks, he was transferred from the trauma center in Virginia to facilities near his family in New Jersey for further treatment and rehabilitation. We recently met with Christopher's mom, Denise, who provided a glimpse into their journey and the multitude of challenges their family has faced.

From Christopher's initial trauma to his ongoing recovery and rehabilitation, Denise emphasized the importance of family and an extended support network. People pitched in to find solutions to insurance issues, treatments that might be considered, or available services. Others accepted roles and responsibilities to assist with the family caregivers' day-to-day activities.



*Denise Sharkey,  
Christopher's mother*

Because caregivers play an essential role in the lives of those living with brain injury, it's important for them to find time to rest and recharge their energy. Denise is involved in her church, enjoys walking, and occasionally takes time to get away with her husband. In addition, once Christopher's condition was stabilized, Denise, a dental hygienist, was able to return to work part-time, which helps shift her focus. Christopher also has two brothers who remain very close to him, and have accepted additional roles and responsibilities by assisting with his care and including him in social activities.

Since his injury, Christopher has undergone multiple medical procedures and surgeries. He continues many different types of therapies to address physical, emotional, cognitive, memory, word finding, and socialization issues. He has participated in many of Kessler Foundation's TBI research studies testing strategies for improving learning and memory. During the week, Christopher lives with friends in a group home, and spends weekends with his family. He continues to progress, even more than 10 years after his injury.

Despite all of his challenges, neither Christopher nor his family are angry or depressed. Their ability to see the positives through such adversity is truly a gift, not only to them, but to everyone they touch. Denise has recorded their experiences in a photo book that helps them remember how far they have come. Her photos capture the struggles and triumphs of their journey, as well as Christopher's infectious smile and incredible spirit.

Denise expresses how grateful, lucky, and blessed their family has felt through all of their grief and challenges. Their faith, determination, and inner strength are a source of hope for their ongoing journey.

## **Resources for Caregivers**

Brain Injury Recovery Network ([www.tbirecovery.org](http://www.tbirecovery.org)): Comprehensive information from the acute phase to long-term concerns, including assistance with insurance, rehabilitation services, home modifications, and caregiver advice.

Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey: Provides an array of advocacy, prevention programs, and support services for New Jersey residents, including care coordination to help families access needed services and support.

Family Helpline: (800) 669-4323 (Toll-Free in NJ);  
Email: [info@bianj.org](mailto:info@bianj.org)



*For this Caregiver Corner, regular contributors Joe and Jane Concato (left) partnered with Margaret and Bob DeLorenzo (below), parents of an adult son with a brain injury, to co-author this article.*



# On the Move... New Orleans, LA, Washington, DC, Cromwell, CT, and Long Branch, NJ

## New Orleans, Louisiana



Dr. Helen Genova



Dr. Ekaterina Dobryakova



Angela Spirou



Dr. Denise Krch

Kessler researchers presented their latest TBI research findings at the Annual Conference of the International Neuropsychological Society in New Orleans. **Helen Genova, PhD**, and colleagues discussed their findings on the association between white matter changes in the brain and executive functioning outcomes in moderate to severe TBI. **Ekaterina Dobryakova, PhD**, organized a symposium of experts that focused on the impact of depression across a number of clinical conditions. Her presentation focused on how the level of depression modulates brain activity during a task that presented individuals with TBI with positive and negative feedback. **Angela Spirou, MA**, presented comparative data on depression, motivational tendencies and striatal activation among individuals with and without TBI. This conference was well attended by neuropsychologists from the U.S. and abroad.

**Denise Krch, PhD**, senior research scientist, presented a poster at the World Congress of the International Brain Injury Association in New Orleans, Louisiana that examined gender differences in neurobehavioral functioning in individuals with chronic TBI.



## Long Branch, New Jersey

**Pamela Tamuleviclus, MSR, CCC-SLP**, of Kessler Institute, was among national experts who presented at the 2017 Annual Professional Seminar of the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey held at Monmouth University. Her workshop, "Maximizing Communication Strategies, Techniques, and Technology," addressed methods of assessment and treatment that can be implemented by interdisciplinary teams to help individuals with brain injury engage positively with their families, caregivers, and healthcare providers. This educational seminar attracted therapists, case managers, social workers, neuropsychologists, counselors, speech-language pathologists and other rehab professionals.



## Cromwell, Connecticut

**Anthony H. Lequerica, PhD**, addressed 250 mental health care professionals at the Acquired Brain Injury Conference hosted by the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services in Cromwell, Connecticut. In his presentation, "Cultural Diversity and the Impact on Rehabilitation Outcomes for Persons with Brain Injury," Dr. Lequerica discussed research on health disparities among minorities with traumatic brain injury. Complex interactions between culturally diverse consumers and healthcare providers lacking in cultural sensitivity contribute to poorer outcomes after TBI, according to Dr. Lequerica. He stressed the need for better access to resources, and cultural and linguistic competence in consumer educational materials, as well as in consumer-provider interactions. The need for awareness and resources extends to the healthcare system and policymaking on the national scale.



Irene Ward, PT



Neil N. Jasey, Jr., MD

## Washington, DC

Kessler's experts in brain injury attended Brain Injury Awareness Day on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., an annual event hosted by the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force. This event was well attended with representation from a number of organizations that provide research, education, advocacy, and clinical services to individuals with brain injury, including the TBI Model System. Representing the Northern New Jersey TBI System (NNJTBIS) were **Anthony H. Lequerica, PhD**, senior research scientist, **Irene Ward, PT**, clinical coordinator, and **Neil N. Jasey, Jr., MD**, medical director of the NNJTBIS and director of Traumatic Brain Injury Services at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation.

# In The Community:

## Reebel Wellness: Connecting Mind and Body to Heal after Brain Injury

Reebel Wellness is a brightly colored, uplifting, and wheelchair-accessible space that offers whole brain training™ to everyone in the community. Individuals with multiple sclerosis, traumatic brain injury (TBI), stroke, autism, and age-related memory impairments are all welcome to attend mixed-group classes that focus on mind and body wellness. The program focuses on multi-modality training that encourages both socialization and empowerment. Located in Waldwick, NJ, the center has brought hundreds of people together since opening in May, 2014.

"The social engagement component is huge. Loneliness is a major lifestyle issue, so I encourage participants to work together in groups. They take pride in learning and going through improvements together," Reebel Wellness owner, Reena Chawla, explains. "This is a no-judgment zone. We offer classes for individuals of all ages and ability."

When you enter Reebel Wellness, you are expected to leave all judgment, labels and cell phones at the door. "We ask that everyone deposit their device when they come in, caregivers too," Reena says, smiling. You don't have to give up your phone (Wi-Fi is offered), but Reena encourages the break from technology, "There's plenty to do here, in addition to our wellness activities. You can read. You can shop. We support women entrepreneurs and they sell their products here." Reena recently displayed jewelry and other handmade items in her waiting area.

Caregivers are encouraged to watch their loved ones through a large window that connects a comfortable waiting area to the five-zone wellness circuit. Each zone focuses on one of the five different aspects of healing: physical fitness, brain training, nutritional education, meditation, and yoga. Elliptical machines and exercise balls get blood flowing and increase energy. Brain games and 3D puzzles challenge the brain and promote learning.



Games and puzzles help build skills.

A nutritionist is available to share information about the benefits of a proper diet. Meditation and yoga zones are designed to improve focus and help with posture, breathing, and flow of energy.

As a brain injury survivor (she sustained

multiple sports-related concussions), Reena personally understands the needs of individuals with cognitive impairments.

"In 1987, I lost my ability to remember," Reena says. "There are two years that I can't recall very much. I don't remember the news or events, and I was very into all of that. My doctor actually diagnosed me as epileptic." Reena believes she was misdiagnosed because at the time, little was known about the lasting effects of concussions. "The anti-epileptic medications just made me feel worse," she recalled.

Through Reebel Wellness, she shares with others the tools that helped her heal on the difficult, and often lonely, road to recovery.



Reebel Wellness storefront in Waldwick, New Jersey

"A person with a brain injury needs a certain kind of dialogue, a certain kind of empathy, and a certain kind of emotion and positivity. Often, they don't get all of the care they need," Reena explains. Reebel Wellness's focus on the mind-body connection sets it apart from other types of rehabilitation.

Reena encourages her clients to get involved in employment opportunities at Reebel Wellness, "I have a 22-year-old client. He's very enthusiastic, so I hired him as a counselor for my kids' program. Another client is 28 years old and big into Latin and reading, so I said, 'let's put him in charge of the books; let's do a reading program.' That is my goal, to funnel them into employment." Reena says. She recognizes the importance of empowering young people, especially those who feel limited or restricted by their diagnosis.

Reena wants her clients to exceed expectations and "rebel" against preconceived assumptions about recovery.

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She believes the tools she provides can help clients become more focused, energized, and aware. By helping them disconnect from their handheld gadgets, Reena encourages them to reconnect with their brains and

bodies. She says, "Don't be so caught up with devices. They are useful, but take control. Bring the awareness. Don't be driven or consumed by life; be in charge of life. Rebel!"



**About Reena**

*Reena Chawla was born in India and resides in Ramsey, New Jersey. A MENSA member, she holds a graduate degree from Babson College and spent years working on Wall Street. She draws inspiration from her own recovery from brain injury and experience as a caregiver to her beloved grandmother. In 2006, she created the Brain Studio®, which provided innovative workshops for managers and teams looking to boost creativity and enhance productivity. In 2014, she created Reebel Wellness as a way to reach more people interested in improving mind and body fitness. She loves puzzles, meditation, and empowering people of all ages and abilities.*



Check out "The Brain and Nutrition" podcast presented by Ernest Ehrhardt, IBDM, IMD, NMD, from the 2015 TBI Consumer Conference at [bit.ly/2slqnxl-TBI](http://bit.ly/2slqnxl-TBI)



Scan QR code to listen to the podcast

**SAVE the DATE** Friday, September 29, 2017  
TBI Consumer Conference

Register at [www.onlineregistrationcenter.com/TBI](http://www.onlineregistrationcenter.com/TBI)

**Moving Forward:**  
Overcoming Obstacles and  
Improving Quality of Life

8:00 am -  
3:30 pm

Missed our 2015 Consumer Conference? Check out speaker podcasts at <https://soundcloud.com/kesslerfoundation/sets/2015-traumatic-brain-injury>



**Ernest Ehrhardt**  
"The Brain and Nutrition"



**Catherine Brubaker**  
Guest Speaker



**Bill Gallagher**  
Guest Speaker



**Michael Greenwald**  
"Mike at the Mike"



**Connie Palmer**  
Keynote Speaker

2 0 1 5 P O D C A S T S

# Nurses' Corner: Nutrition Primer For People With TBI

Bonnie Tillman, RN, BSN, CRRN



Nutrition plays an important role in maintaining your brain and its function. A healthy diet during recovery from a brain injury is highly beneficial. It is a fact that deficiencies in certain nutrients and chemicals can disrupt brain function and your ability to think clearly. After a brain injury, it is important to eat enough nutritional calories to maintain optimal brain function.

There are many tips and suggestions found on the internet or in books about healthy eating. In general, you should eat a diet that contains fresh fruit, vegetables, fish, meat, and grains; these are healthier than processed foods and also help to build your immune system. In addition, the following nutritional tips can help:

- Eat small meals every three or four hours.
- Keep small baggies of healthy snacks with you during the day to boost your energy; such as nuts, trail mix, apples, cheese, hard boiled eggs, and snack bars.
- Balance your meals with a combination of protein, vegetables, healthy fats, and carbohydrates.
- Eat in moderation; do not overeat.
- Eat by the clock. If your brain is not sending signals, try setting a timer to alert you that it is time to eat.
- Weight gain is common after a brain injury. This is yet another reason to eat a healthy diet.
- Try to schedule your meals at the same time every day. Your body works best that way.

After a brain injury, problems with eating, drinking, and swallowing may occur. It is important you follow restrictions that your provider puts into place. Otherwise, more severe health problems may develop.

Risks you should be aware of include:

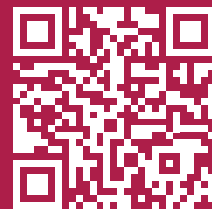
- If the muscles in your mouth are weak, you may dribble food or have difficulty chewing,
- Coughing or choking due to weakness or poor timing with your swallowing.
- Because liquids run down your throat faster than solids, they may be harder to swallow.
- If food or liquid enter into your airway instead of your stomach, you have a higher risk for developing pneumonia.

Common foods to avoid after a brain injury include:

- Alcoholic beverages
- Caffeine drinks and products
- Salty foods
- Excessive sweets and candy

If you have further questions or concerns regarding your nutrition, consult a nutritionist or a dietitian. You may find one at your local hospital or public health department—they are even available at some grocery stores.

Did you know that 30-50% of people with TBI were injured while they were under the influence of alcohol? This Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems (TBIMS) Fact Sheet describes the link between alcohol use and TBI onset, alcohol in relation to TBI recovery, seizures, mental functioning, mood, sexuality, and medications, and how family members can help a person with TBI struggling with drug abuse. Read more about alcohol use before and after traumatic brain injury, or other TBI Model Systems fact sheets containing useful information for families and people with TBI by visiting <http://www.msktc.org/tbi/factsheets>, or by scanning the QR code.



Volunteers are the heart of our traumatic brain injury research.

Research done at Kessler Foundation can improve the lives of people affected by traumatic brain injury.

We can use help from people with traumatic brain injury as well as healthy volunteers.

If you'd like to help, please reach out to us today at [KesslerFoundation.org/join](http://KesslerFoundation.org/join)





## MEET THE STAFF



Meet **Ameen DeGraffenreid, BA**, research assistant in Traumatic Brain Injury Research at Kessler Foundation. Ameen earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and cognitive neuroscience from Rutgers University, where he graduated cum laude with honors in psychology and completed an undergraduate thesis. Ameen recruits research participants for the Northern New Jersey Traumatic Brain Injury Model System (NNJTBIMS), one of 14 federally funded TBI Model Systems in the U.S. Each Model System contributes data to the TBI Model Systems National Data and Statistical Center, conducts clinical TBI research, and serves as a resource for individuals with TBI and their caregivers, health care professionals, and the community.

Ameen coordinates and monitors data collection for the NNJTBIS, conducts and assists with data analyses, and administers neuropsychological test batteries to participants in ongoing research studies. Ameen also works in daily partnership with clinical staff at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation's campuses in Chester and Saddle Brook, and travels to rehabilitation centers throughout the region.

"Having friends and family members with abnormal psychopathology, and seeing the significance of mental health downplayed or overlooked in my community, I gravitated to an area of study where I could make a difference," says Ameen, who plans to pursue a career in clinical neuroscience research. "Working at Kessler Foundation, I'm at the forefront of cutting-edge research and technological advances, and I work with scientists who spearhead the field of rehabilitation research. I really get a sense of enriched purpose from being a part of the Foundation."



Meet **Jacquelyn Collins, PT, DPT**, physical therapist at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation in Chester, NJ. Jacquelyn became interested in pursuing a career in healthcare after volunteering as an emergency medical technician in Fair Lawn, NJ. She graduated from Quinnipiac University in Hamden, CT, with an undergraduate degree in health science studies, then went on to receive her doctorate in physical therapy. Jacquelyn has been a practicing physical therapist at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation for two years.

To fulfill a clinical affiliation requirement, Jacquelyn was placed in the neurologic gym in Chester, and has grown to love working with this patient population. "Each patient is different and presents his or her own set of unique challenges," says Jacquelyn. "It's an exciting adventure to assist each person in achieving their own personal goals, returning to the life they love, and reaching their full potential."

Jacquelyn is currently participating in Kessler Institute's Residency in Neurologic Physical Therapy program. This unique 13-month APTA/ABTA accredited program provides advanced training and education in treating patients with traumatic brain injury, stroke, spinal cord injury and other neurologic diagnoses. Jacquelyn is involved in a range of educational experiences including clinical rotations, specialty clinics, grand rounds, interdisciplinary observations, exposure to state-of-the-art equipment and technology, and in-services and lectures. She also assists in various research projects conducted by the Institute and Kessler Foundation, including studies for the Northern New Jersey TBI System.

**KESSLER FOUNDATION** 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Read our interactive online report highlighting how progress achieved by Kessler Foundation helps people with disabilities fulfill their goals to contribute to their families, their community and the workplace. To learn more, please visit [www.kesslerfoundation.wixsite.com/2016-annual-report](http://www.kesslerfoundation.wixsite.com/2016-annual-report)

#KF AnnualReport

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# IN THE NEWS...



Dr. Chiaravalloti

## New Grants from the New Jersey Commission

Foundation scientists **Nancy Chiaravalloti, PhD, Peii Chen, PhD, Ekaterina Dobryakova, PhD, and Soha Saleh, PhD**, were awarded four grants totalling \$713,000 by the New Jersey Commission on Brain Injury Research. Each grant funds different aspects of functional and cognitive deficits in individuals with moderate to severe traumatic brain injury, including learning and memory, and upper extremity/limb mobility. Dr. Chiaravalloti's grant, funds a study applying the modified Story Memory Technique to school-aged children with TBI. "If we can successfully adapt the mSMT, we will influence not only the rehabilitation process for children and adolescents, but also clinical practice and policy," Dr. Chiaravalloti predicted.



Dr. Chen



Dr. Dobryakova



Dr. Saleh

## Kessler TBI Research on WABC-TV News



A recent ABC7-NY broadcast of "Upfront with Diana Williams" featured **Dr. Nancy Chiaravalloti** and **Jane Concato**. Williams interviewed both about the impact of brain injury on cognition. Dr. Chiaravalloti answered questions about her research into new strategies for rehabilitation, and Concato, a member of Kessler TBI Consumer Advisory Board, shared her personal experiences with recovery from TBI, and her involvement with the TBI community.

## Dr. Chiaravalloti Named 2017 Mitchell Rosenthal Memorial Lecturer

In February, **Nancy Chiaravalloti, PhD**, gave the Mitchell Rosenthal Memorial Lecture at the 2017 Rehabilitation Psychology Mid-Winter Conference in Albuquerque, NM. "Having had the privilege of working with Dr. Rosenthal early in my career, it is very meaningful to be chosen to give this memorial lecture in his name," said Dr. Chiaravalloti. "Dr. Rosenthal's mentorship is fundamental to what I have been able to accomplish as a clinical researcher. His leadership in brain injury research and education remains an inspiration to those of us who follow his path."

## Brain Injury Alliance of NJ Marks Milestone

In May, the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey marked 35 years of providing hope and support to the TBI community at their 11th Annual Gala at the Crystal Plaza in Livingston, New Jersey.



Pictured: Erin Donnelly, PT, NCS, Clinical Manager, Cecilia Pagkalinawan, RN, CRRN, Nurse Manager, Teddy Potter, RN, Anthony Lequerica, PhD, and Belinda Washington.



## Dr. Kirshblum Appointed Department Chair at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

**Steven Kirshblum, MD**, is the new chair of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. Dr. Kirshblum is director of Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation and Senior Medical Director at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation. He was also appointed Chief Medical Officer at Kessler Foundation. Dr. Kirshblum serves as Chief Medical Officer for the Northern New Jersey Spinal Cord Injury Model System, a collaborative program of Kessler Foundation, Kessler Institute and University Hospital, Newark, where he is Chief of Service.

# IN THE NEWS (Continued)

## Coping with the Impact of Trauma

At the 4th Annual Neuro Trauma Conference, Kessler professionals addressed the medical, physical, social, emotional, behavioral and legal issues that confront patients with spinal cord and brain injury, their families, and caregivers. The program, titled "Coping with the Impact of Trauma: Tools to Manage the Next Steps," featured experts from the Northern New Jersey TBI System and the Northern New Jersey SCI System. Kessler is one of only nine centers in the nation with model systems for care and research for both brain and spinal cord injury. Many presentations had relevance to both types of trauma.

**Steven Kirshblum, MD**, and **Joyce Fichtenbaum, PhD**, of Kessler Institute, discussed strategies for delivering news about catastrophic injuries to patients and families. **Neil N. Jasey, Jr, MD**, director of Brain Injury Rehabilitation at Kessler Institute and medical director of the NNJT BIS, addressed the management of spasticity, and **Benjamin Seidel, DO**, and **Jessica Gaetano, PsyD**, covered seizure complications. **Trevor Dyson-Hudson, MD**, director of SCI Research at Kessler Foundation and co-director of the NNJSCIS, discussed strategies for pain management.

**Nancy Chiaravalloti, PhD**, presented "Cognitive Functioning in Individuals with Spinal Cord Injury," a review of her new line of research into under recognized cognitive deficits in the SCI population.



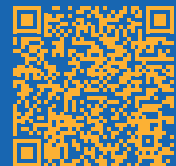
Dr. Trevor Dyson-Hudson

Tune in to **Dr. Dyson-Hudson's**, podcast to learn more about Pain after Spinal Cord Injury at [bit.ly/2ubaEvv-TDH](http://bit.ly/2ubaEvv-TDH) or scan the QR code to listen to the podcast.



Dr. Nancy Chiaravalloti

Tune in to **Dr. Chiaravalloti's** podcast to learn more about the effects of SCI on cognitive function at [bit.ly/2ubbhoH-NC](http://bit.ly/2ubbhoH-NC) or scan the QR code to listen to the podcast.



Register at [www.KesslerFoundation.org/snr](http://www.KesslerFoundation.org/snr)

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