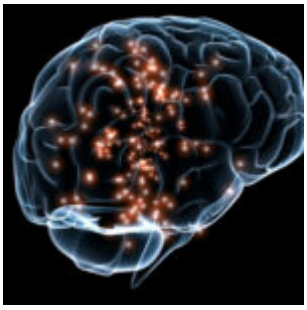
June Is Brain Injury Awareness Month



June is Brain Injury Awareness Month in Canada. Why dedicate a whole month to this particular type of injury' Because according to Brain Injury Canada, brain injury is a silent epidemic. In Canada, brain injury is the number one killer and disabler of people under the age of 44.

Acquired or traumatic brain injuries, such as concussions, may result in a diminished or altered state of consciousness, and impaired cognitive, physical, emotional and/or behavioural functioning. And currently, there are no drugs or techniques that can cure a brain injury.

In terms of workplace health and safety, work-related traumatic brain injuries are on the rise, according to Angela Colantonio, senior scientist at the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute at the University of Toronto.

For example, in Ontario, 7.3% of all traumatic brain injuries are work-related and traumatic brain injuries contribute to almost half of the work-related traumatic fatalities. And on average, WorkSafeBC accepts more than 1,200 claims from workers who have experienced a concussion injury at work. In examining workers' comp board reports, Colantonio also found there's an increased trend in number of concussion cases that are being reported.

The highest mortality rates from work-related traumatic brain injuries are in agriculture, forestry, mining and

fishing/trapping. Transportation and storage have high rates of severe traumatic brain injuries, while manufacturing accounts for a high percentage of mild brain injuries.

So it's critical that employers take steps to protect workers from suffering traumatic brain injuries, such as by training all employees on preventing work-related brain injury and recognizing the symptoms of such injuries, including concussions.

Concussion Basics

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury in which the brain strikes the inside of the skull. Concussions can be caused by slips, trips and falls, vehicular accidents or by being struck in the head. But you don't have to hit your head to suffer a concussion'it's possible to have a concussion due to whiplash, or rapid shaking or jerking of the head or even the body.

A concussion may'but doesn't always'involve a loss of consciousness. But if a concussion *does* result in a loss of consciousness, it's considered life threatening. In addition, some symptoms of a concussion may not appear immediately after the injury, but may emerge in the subsequent hours or days. So it's critical to monitor a worker for symptoms several days after he suffers a head injury.

The symptoms of a concussion may include:

- Headache or a feeling of pressure in your head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness
- Seeing stars or lights
- Blurred or double vision
- Slurred speech
- Balance problems
- Sensitivity to light and/or noise
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering

- Confusion, drowsiness and an incoherent thought process.

Workers who’ve suffered a head injury or possible concussion should immediately notify a supervisor and seek medical attention. They shouldn’t be left alone or drive. And they should be closely watched for any of the above symptoms.