The Oceanside Brain Injury Society is a Registered Not-For-Profit Society offering a resource network of information, guidance and support to anyone who is living with Brain Injury, either Acquired or Traumatic Brain Injuries.

OBISNet is a member-driven society, of which its’ members have incurred trauma to the brain, or are the family or loved one of the person who has. We are all living with and surviving the devastating and life altering affects of Brain Injury.

Knowing first hand the utter lack of resources for brain injury in the Ocean-side region, the founders of OBISNet were inspired to start a resource network of their own. We’ve helped others and can help you, too.

Please Note: Always seek medical advice from a Qualified Licensed Medical Practitioner.
**Founder’s Story**

Canada Day celebrations won’t ever be the same for Scarlette Lexington again. What began as a beautiful sunny celebrative day ended with four of her front teeth shoved up into her skull, a $20,000 dental bill and a frontal-lobe brain injury. Life was about to get very, very challenging; not only for her, but for everyone around her.

It would be years before she or her loved ones realized just how much this experience had changed her: in many ways for the better, but in many ways for the worse.

It was a time to face and fight all the “demons” in her life, for now she had no choice but to do so.

Navigating through years of agonizing pain, both mental and physical pain, Scarlette battled not only with the confusion, anger, denial, self-loathing and a deep-seeded desire to end her life (all of which go hand-in-hand with head injury), she also needed to survive alongside a pre-existing condition of Post-Traumatic Stress which was exacerbated when she hit her head.

Once self-pity wore off, she knew it was time to take control of her life in such a way that she had never done before.

Scarlette’s metamorphosis would include a full legal name change, a separation from her family, a new outlook on the positives in her life and a reconection with herself, spiritually also, realizing that in the end, she has a brain injury and that it does not have her.

With her experiences not too far behind her, a renewed sense of strength, self-respect and desire to help anyone else going through the same nightmare, Scarlette founded Oceanside Brain Injury Society & Resource Network, knowing first hand the discouraging lack of resources and support available to survivors of brain injury in the Oceanside region.

**Co-Founder’s Story**


Her initial recovery took 16 painful years and included legal issues which spanned three separate countries.

As Jessica had little help from the medical profession, she is now an avid campaigner for Head Injury Awareness.

Jessica’s inspirational story has helped to save three very precious lives. It gives hope and inspiration to both head injury and stroke survivors.

Jessica has given many presentations in various locations across Canada. Her unflagging entreaties to the Irish Government also has brought about new legislation for the head-injured.

Her goal is to bring about better aftercare for both stroke and head injured survivors worldwide.

As a result of her ordeal, Jessica is now a brain injury survivor activist and author of her first book entitled “From Tragedy To Triumph”. A second entry to her literary contributions is coming soon to a book store near you.

To purchase a copy of her book or to check out Jessica’s personal website, please visit:

http://www.jessicaetaylor.org

**Breakfast Club Meet’N’Greet**

Every Friday, OBISNet Members participate in a “Breakfast Club Meet ‘N’ Greet” at the White Spot near Wembley Mall in Parksville.

It’s a great chance for newcomers to come and introduce themselves and hear about others’ experiences and to learn about how OBISNet can help persons with Acquired or Traumatic Brain Injury, and support their family and loved ones.

Please Note: The venue for OBISNet Breakfast Club may change from week to week, as may be required, so please ensure you register with OBISNet to receive notifications of this sort. There is no charge to register, and no charge for membership. Volunteers are always welcomed.

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Brain Injury and Nutrition Go Hand in Hand

Eating the right food is very important. Juicing fruits and veggies is a great way to go. Including raw, organic vegetables to your diet has many proven benefits. Extra protein is also essential.

As well as taking a good quality daily multivitamin, scientists have recently discovered that cocoa actually improves brain function by enhancing blood flow in the brain. Folic acid is essential and helps the brain's “recent memory recall”, while Vitamin E allows for more oxygen to get through to the brain.

Remembering to eat can be very challenging and so are the fears and anxieties that a head-injured survivor may have surrounding the kitchen and the process of cooking. Eating raw food wherever possible is a good alternative to firing up the stove and it also helps to eliminate this type of anxiety.

Fitness is essential to anyone's daily life. For a person with a brain-injury, achieving daily physical activity can be a challenge. Deep breathing exercises combined with Yoga exercises are also very beneficial. Just getting outside and breathing in some fresh air has its benefits.

Talk with your doctor, discuss a fitness and nutrition plan most appropriate for you and your survival.

A Note To Family and Friends of TBI Survivors

If you have a friend or loved one who has suffered a brain-injury, that person is no longer the same person. They may look the same, but their emotions, behaviours and functioning are forever altered.

Family, loved ones, friends, caregivers, co-workers, teachers, etc play an important role in helping a head-injured person. Acknowledging the person's injury, showing love, respect and support is the first step and will help with improving communication skills and learning new coping methods which are essential to more harmonious relationships and basic survival of this invisible injury.

As many survivors have deficit in social skills, aiding the survivor in social situations is very helpful and recommended. By not drawing attention to possible inappropriate behaviour or reactions of the survivor and not reacting strongly to it will help a great deal.

As some survivors have slurred speech and poor recent recall, they also repeat themselves quite often and take longer to fully process what is being said. Minimizing a person's feelings and pressuring the survivor beyond his or her current ability is strongly not recommended.

The impact on family and the survivor's social circles is immense and great patience is required.

Social Stigma

“Social Stigma” is a severe social disapproval of or personal discontent with a person, on the grounds of their unique characteristics distinguishing them from others in society and is a direct consequence from the lack of information to the public in general about BRAIN/HEAD-INJURY.

One of the toughest challenges a head-injured survivor faces is self-acknowledgement and awareness of their own disabilities due to this invisible disability.

Having to embrace the public as a person so far removed from the person they were before their injury is extremely taxing on the survivor, taking its’ toll both emotionally and physically.

Thoughtless terminology such as “retarded”, “twisted”, “psycho”, “vegetable”, “brain-damaged”, “crazy”, just to name a few, are all hurtful, demeaning and antiquated.

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A major emphasis must be placed on prevention activities. Prevention and public education must occur within communities and across the province to reduce the incidence of brain injuries. A small reduction in brain injury will result in health care cost savings and reduce the pain and suffering experienced by persons with brain injury and their families.

Public awareness and education must emphasize safety and the reduction of risk factors for injury, and these activities must be promoted to support the health and safety of all British Columbians.

In addition, critical to assisting persons with brain injury and their families is ensuring that emphasis is also placed on minimizing risks of further injury. Services and supports must be designed to mitigate further health complications following the initial injury and to prevent subsequent brain injury.

Brain injury affects a person’s cognitive, physical, psychological and social well-being. Consequences of brain injury typically include difficulties with memory, slowed ability to process information, difficulty in concentrating, seizures, double vision, headaches, fatigue, increased need for sleep, difficulty in completing tasks without reminders, increased anxiety, depression and mood swings, impulsive behaviour, difficulty making decisions and behaviours that may result in harm to self or others.

In addition, the personal cost of reorienting to a new identity and of rebuilding on the day-to-day functioning lost due to the brain injury affects the person’s current and future quality of life.

For families and significant others, the effects are equally devastating. There is a struggle to understand the full impact of the brain injury on the loved one, issues of grief, loss and intimacy, reorientation of roles and responsibilities within the family and the impact on one’s own coping skills and resourcefulness.

The costs to society are enormous, not only for care, treatment and rehabilitation but also in lost productivity, the personal contribution to society and the generational impact on the community”.