

Evaluation of mild traumatic brain injured pediatric patients' discharge instructions.

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The purpose of this study is to determine and evaluate the current quality of discharge instructions and treatments given to children who have sustained a closed head injury/concussion. In the U. S. each year, there are more than 1.5 million brain injuries that range from mild to severe. The majority of these patients, approximately 650,000, are in the pediatric age group. While 15% of these pediatric patients seeking treatment will require admission and strict follow-up for severe concussions, the majority of those evaluated will be diagnosed with mild traumatic brain injury (MTBI)/concussion and will be discharged from the emergency department to home.

A growing body of data is being compiled on the previously unrecognized long-term effects of MTBI, post-concussive syndrome, and the second strike phenomena. Given our increased awareness of the potential long-term effects of MTBI, it has become increasingly important to ensure that patients and families are well informed about what they may encounter during the recovery period. In addition to what a patient may expect during his or her convalescence, it is equally as important to help the patients avoid cumulative damage via a second insult by appropriately recommending a restricted activity period and follow-up care. However, relatively few studies have focused on quality of discharge instructions and symptomatic treatments, given to the patients and families.

In 1995, Genuardi and King reported (in a small study of 33 patients) that pediatric patients with sports related head injuries are actually poorly informed at discharge with only 30.3% of patients with grade 1 concussion and 20% of those with grade 2 concussions receiving appropriate instructions. Given these and other findings, it is imperative that we evaluate our current discharge practices. The data derived from this study will be used in developing and implementing an up-to-date and consistent standard for our discharge and patient education practice at Upstate Medical University regarding treatment of the concussed patient.

This project is a retrospective chart review for patients, aged 2 – 18 years, evaluated and treated for head injury in the SUNY Upstate Medical University Hospital during the period 04/10/2005 to 04/10/2006. Using a structured data extraction form, we seek to evaluate and define the current standard of discharge care at SUNY Upstate Medical University for instructing patients following head injury.