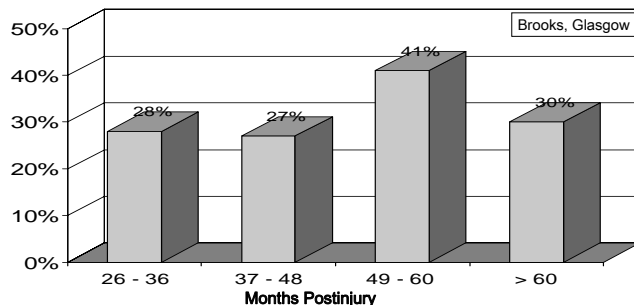


# Getting Back to Work

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Medical Center



## Proportion of Employed Patients at Varying Times Postinjury



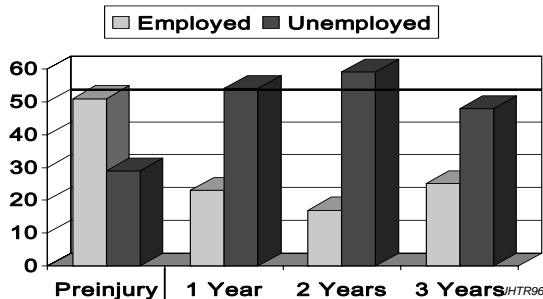
## A Multicenter Longitudinal Investigation of Return to Work and Community Integration Following Traumatic Brain Injury

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Jeffrey S. Kreutzer, PhD\*  
Mitchell Rosenthal, PhD†  
Richard Delmonico, PhD†  
Mary Ellen Young, PhD†

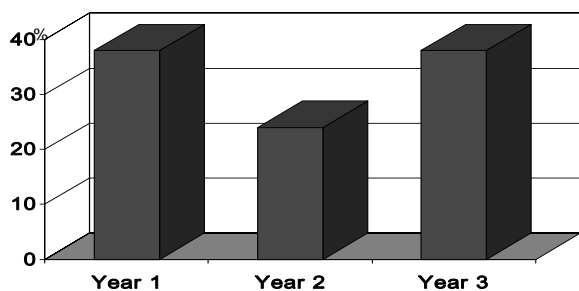
**Objective:** To characterize changes in employment status and community integration following traumatic brain injury and to investigate relationships among outcome, sociodemographic, and injury-related variables. **Design:** Longitudinal analyses of employment (n = 42) and community integration (n = 53) were conducted, with data examined at three follow-up periods. Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to investigate the relationship between employment, time since injury, and demographic and injury-related variables. Repeated measures ANOVA and multiple regression analyses were utilized to investigate similar relationships for the community integration sample. **Settings:** Outpatient clinics affiliated with the TBI Model System program. **Participants:** Patients with traumatic brain injury who received acute medical care at a Level I Trauma Center and received inpatient rehabilitation. Mean age of subjects was 35.9 years. The full range of injury severity was represented. **Main Outcome Measures:** Employment status determined through structured interview and scores on the Community Integration Questionnaire. **Results:** Less than 40% of persons employed before injury were employed at any follow-up interval. Fewer persons were employed at year 2 than at year 1 and years 3 or 4. Seventy-five percent of persons employed at year 1 were also employed at year 3 or 4. Fifty percent of persons unemployed at year 1 were either employed or otherwise productively engaged at year 3 or 4. Unemployed persons had longer acute hospital stays than employed persons at all follow-up intervals. **Conclusions:** TBI has an adverse, long-term impact on employment and productivity. Findings highlight the need for postacute rehabilitation programs with particular emphasis on vocational rehabilitation. Uncertainties remain about the impact of brain injury on socialization and home activity patterns, partly because of limitations in measurement of community integration. **Key words:** community integration, employment, longitudinal investigation, outcome

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## Cross Sectional Analysis of Employment Status



## Longitudinal Analysis of Postinjury Employment Patterns



*JHTR96*  
all persons employed preinjury; n=42

## Return to Work and Job Stability after TBI A TBI Model System Multicenter Analysis

J. Kreutzer, J. Marwitz, W. Walker, et al.  
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Job Stability after TBI

## Job Stability after TBI Primary Outcome Measure

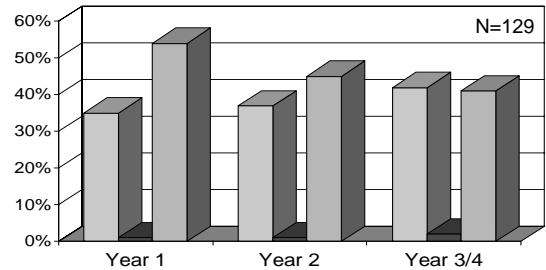
### Job Stability – operational definitions

- Stably Employed - employed at all three follow-up intervals (n=44)
- Unstably Employed - employed at 1 or 2 of 3 follow-up intervals (n=35)
- Unemployed - unemployed at all 3 follow-up intervals (n=50)



## Employment and Productivity Status

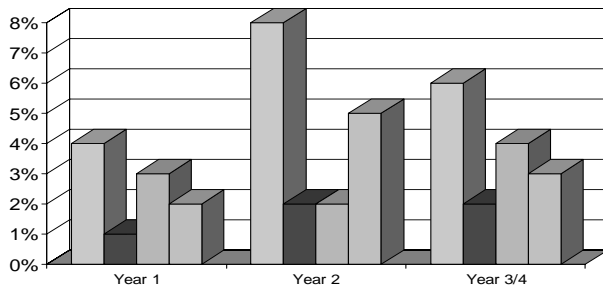
Competitively Employed ■ Special Employed □ Unemployed



Job Stability after TBI

## Employment and Productivity Status

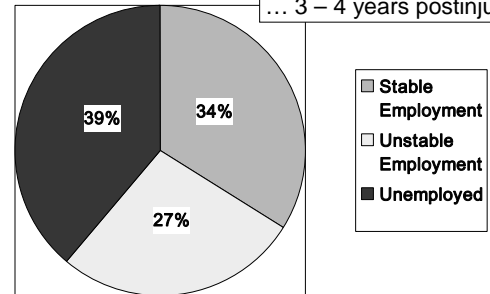
Student ■ Retired □ Homemaker □ Volunteer



Job Stability after TBI

## Job Stability after TBI

... 3 – 4 years postinjury



Stable Employment  
Unstable Employment  
Unemployed

## Common Things Workers Say After A Brain Injury

- ≡ “Even though I’m a mess, I still have to support my family.”
- ≡ “I used to make \$28/hour. Now, the only job I can get pays \$6.50.”
- ≡ “I’m not sure what I can do, but I have to do something.”

Some helpful ideas.....



## Neurobehavioral Problems

Most Commonly Reported More Than 10 Years Postinjury

- |                           |                                  |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Frustrated             | 10. Tired                        |
| 2. Forgets reading        | 11. Thinks slowly                |
| 3. Impatient              | 12. Thinking of the right word   |
| 4. Misunderstood          | 13. Restless                     |
| 5. Bored                  | 14. Trouble making decisions     |
| 6. Loses train of thought | 15. Trouble following directions |
| 7. Reads slowly           | 16. Learns slowly                |
| 8. Writes slowly          |                                  |
| 9. Moves slowly           |                                  |



Witol, Sander, Seel, & Kreutzer

## Most Commonly Reported Slowness Problems\*



Symptom	5-10 yrs	10+ yrs
moving	2.54	2.22
writing	2.30	2.24
reading	2.34	2.27
thinking	2.27	2.19
learning		2.11

\*among 15 most commonly reported

## Employee Evaluation Supervision Issues

	Rating
1. Performs routine tasks with little or no guidance	always
2. Requires little supervision to complete complex tasks	always
3. Willingly accepts and carries out assignments	always

Position Title: Executive Secretary I



## Employee Evaluation Time Utilization Issues

	Rating
1. Able to work effectively against tight deadlines	always
2. Performs effectively in pressured and tense situations	always
3. Uses time in an efficient and productive manner	always
4. Uses the organization's resources effectively to meet deadlines	always

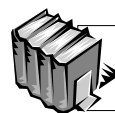
Position Title: Executive Secretary I



## Employee Evaluation Time Utilization Issues

	Rating
5. Sets priorities and revises work plans to meet deadlines	always
6. Works overtime to make certain that deadlines are met	always
7. Punctual	always
8. Coordinates time away from the office in accordance with guidelines	always

Possible Ratings: Always, Usually, Rarely



## Employee Evaluation Knowledge and Creativity

	Rating
1. Demonstrates thorough knowledge and applies to assignments	always
2. Maintains conscientious effort to enhance knowledge	usually
3. Provides and applies creative solutions to assignments	usually

Position Title: Executive Secretary I



## Employee Evaluation Performance Quality Issues

	Rating
1. Thorough and accurate in completing assignments	usually
2. Attentive to detail	usually
3. Maintains acceptable production rate without sacrificing quality	usually
4. Reliable	always

Possible Ratings: Always, Usually, Rarely



## Employee Evaluation Performance Quality Issues

	Rating
5. Answers calls promptly and takes accurate messages	always
6. Demonstrates good follow-through on assignments	always
7. Adapts and copes well with changing situations	always
8. Written communication is organized, grammatical, and accurate	always

Position Title: Executive Secretary I

## Performance Evaluation Professionalism

	Rating
1. Active in providing phone coverage to the team	always
2. Offers assistance to team members and supports "team concept"	always
3. Resolves conflict in a professional manner	usually

Position Title: Executive Secretary I



## Key Point Successful Return to Work

Recognize that employee evaluations often emphasize performance speed



## Key Point Successful Return to Work

Some jobs and work environments are more disability-friendly than others

## Key Point

Vocational Demands and Outcome



Success in higher status occupations is more difficult because of lower error tolerances

## Vocational Tasks for Persons with Severe Disabilities

- Typing & word processing
- Computer data entry
- Photocopying
- Phone answering
- Collating & stapling
- Mail preparation
- Filing
- Packaging & unpacking
- Pricing
- Delivery
- Light assembly
- Light cleaning
- Microfilming
- Food preparation



Experience tells us that people with even the most severe disabilities can succeed at working -



- The personal qualities of successful workers are well known.
- Personal qualities are different than work skills.
- You have the ability to change the kind of person you are, and to succeed at work.

### “Am I Ready To Work ?” Test *True or False?*



- I know my strengths and limitations.
- I have clear goals and focus on making things better.
- I keep trying even when things seem difficult.
- I try to learn from my mistakes.

### “Am I Ready To Work ?” Test *True or False?*

- I am willing to admit when I make a mistake.
- I am willing to ask for help.
- When people ask if I need help, I respond politely.
- When people talk, I make sure to listen.



### “Am I Ready To Work ?” Test *True or False?*

- When I'm not sure how to do something, I ask.
- I look for the positive in other people and situations.
- I'm polite and respectful to others.
- I can learn a lot from other people.
- I'm thankful when people offer me constructive feedback.



### “Am I Ready To Work ?” Test *True or False?*

- I do my best to be patient with myself, my goals, and other people.
- I pay attention to how I'm feeling.
- I work hard to control my discouragement and anger.
- I think about other people's feelings.



### “Am I Ready To Work ?” Test *True or False?*



- I can clearly see the benefits of work.
- Outside of work, I try to do things that are good for me.
- I choose to spend time with people who can help me reach my goals.

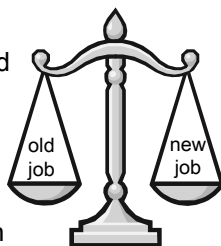
### “Am I Ready To Work ?” Test *True or False?*



- I am an important and responsible member of my treatment team.
- I communicate my feelings, needs, concerns, and ideas.
- I understand that success at work means more than just doing my job.

### Factors Influencing Success in Returning to Former Job

- ▶ use of formerly learned skills
- ▶ tendency to compare pre- and postinjury performance
- ▶ prestige level of newly assigned vs. former responsibilities
- ▶ pre-existing relationships with supervisor, co-workers



### If I Am Not Working What Can I Do?



### Alternatives to Paid Work

- ✓ Taking on more responsibilities at home
- ✓ Develop a daily routine
- ✓ Offer to help family, friends, or neighbors
- ✓ Join a club



VCU Health System

### Alternatives to Paid Work

- ✓ Hobbies and activities you enjoyed before



- ✓ Adopt a pet
- ✓ Take classes
- ✓ Volunteer

## The Benefits of Volunteering

- ▶ Valuable work experience to list on your resume
- ▶ Step toward paid employment
- ▶ Supportive environment to practice and learn new skills



VCU Health System

## The Benefits of Volunteering

- ▶ Opportunity to build relationships
- ▶ Meet people with job connections to help you find paid work
- ▶ Chance to build your stamina and endurance



## The Benefits of Volunteering

- ▶ Help others
- ▶ Improve you community
- ▶ Build your self-esteem
- ▶ Increase confidence in your abilities
- ▶ Feel productive and positive about yourself



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## Where to Volunteer

- ✓ Churches or places of worship
- ✓ Schools and programs that serve children
- ✓ Hospitals and nursing homes
- ✓ Art galleries
- ✓ Brain Injury Association or other support organization
- ✓ Community services organizations (like Meals of Wheels, United Way)

## Ideas for Learning

- ▶ Library visits
- ▶ College and high school programs
- ▶ Read newspapers and magazines
- ▶ Surf the web and visit educational sites
- ▶ Visit parks, museums, historical sites
- ▶ Visit stores that offer educational demonstrations



Realize that living a positive and productive life is possible even with a brain injury.



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## Working or Not – You Can Succeed

- ▶ Be patient and persistent.
- ▶ Get better by learning and trying.
- ▶ Create or find a supportive environment.
- ▶ Live according to your good values.
- ▶ Define success in your own terms.



## Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center



NIDRR Traumatic Brain Injury  
Model System Program

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