

The Monthly Qi

What's Happening at Southwest Acupuncture College

The Monthly Qi is a one-page Shout out devoted to the seasonal energy of the year.
Contact Sophia Bungay, Director of Admissions and Alumni and share your *Qi* with us.
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Mild Traumatic Brain Injury – It's Real.

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Since March is Brain Injury Awareness month, we decided it would be good to highlight this often misunderstood injury. What is invisible, often not diagnosed, yet functionally impacting? Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI/MTBI)! Experts estimate that there are at least 1 -2 million new Mild Traumatic Brain Injuries each year and 56% of people with Mild Traumatic Brain Injury do not get diagnosed in the emergency room. (1) Falls and motor vehicle accidents are the first and second leading cause of brain injury in the United States, according to the CDC. Coup and Contrecoup injury, caused when the jelly-like brain collides with the skull, often results in diffuse axonal shearing injury. Diffuse injury causes a variety of symptoms that can be confusing for the individual and medical providers.



Concussion and “Post-concussive Syndrome”:

About 70 – 80% of people recover from concussions with no further symptoms after 1 – 3 months. For the other 20 – 30%, ongoing TBI symptoms continue.

Symptoms: Many individuals experience ‘brain fog’ during the initial post trauma period. During this time, they may feel fatigued, confused, and have difficulty concentrating. The brain is healing and it’s helpful to reduce the demands on the brain during this time.

Other changes that people may notice are:

- Difficulty multi-tasking and slowed speed of processing, memory problems.
- Executive Functioning – organizing, keeping track of appointments, prioritizing, self-monitoring, decision making, time management, initiation of tasks, and problem solving.
- Vision changes – sensitivity to bright or fluorescent lights, difficulty using computer screens. The brain may not be filtering stimuli as well or visual convergence may be impacted, even if visual acuity is fine.
- Headaches and fatigue.
- Emotional overload, reactivity, anxiety or depression.

Recommendations: If you or someone you know is experiencing the impacts of mild traumatic brain injury, these tips may be helpful.

- The brain budget has gotten smaller, and every task requires more energy – a bigger section of the energy pie. Self-acceptance and patience is needed! Plan accordingly by putting less items on the daily agenda and balance out high-demand items (like driving which requires multi-tasking, speed of processing, and is visually demanding) with lower demand tasks.
- Recognize when the brain budget is about to be used up and the brain is about to take itself off-line. This can happen suddenly. Take rest breaks throughout the day and plan realistically so that the cognitive and energy demands are completed before the brain becomes overwhelmed.
- Treatments such as cognitive therapy with a speech therapist, vision therapy with a behavioral optometrist, psychological support or a neuro-psychological evaluation with a qualified professional, and Acupuncture & Traditional Herbal Medicine can all be helpful.
- For visual fatigue and screen sensitivity, built in accessibility features on devices and computers can provide text to speech options so that information can be accessed auditorily as well as visually.
- Organizational and time management planning – break tasks down into smaller steps and take one step at a time. Write down or put on an electronic calendar tasks, appointments, etc. Automatic reminders on computers, devices, or smart watches can be very helpful!

In summary, Traumatic Brain Injury can be challenging because it is invisible and impacting, but there are many strategies, treatments, and compensation techniques that help during recovery!

(1) Acimovic, Mary Lou. *Mild Traumatic Brain Injury: The Guidebook*. Lulu Enterprises Inc., 2010.