

# Holland Bloorview

Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

## Transition from Rehabilitation to School for Youth with an Acquired Brain Injury: Exploring Parents' Perceptions and the Role of the Physiotherapist

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# Background

- Annually close to 5000 children in Canada are admitted to hospital with an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI).<sup>1</sup>
- Effects of an ABI can include sensory, motor, cognitive, language, emotional, and behavioural changes.<sup>2,3</sup>
- Recovery of motor skills may be unpredictable, affecting a child's participation in certain school activities.<sup>4</sup>
- Little literature specific to motor challenges affecting youth's return to school and how physiotherapists influence the school transition process.

# Acquired Brain Injury

## Role of PT

- Primary focus on motor recovery (gross motor skills, functional ambulation, community mobility)
- PT part of inter-disciplinary team and play a role in each aspect of school re-entry transition process
- Prepare and evaluate child's physical function to maximize participation in complex social and physical environment of school

## Parent's Perceptions

- Parents primary advocate for their child
- Key decision maker in setting goals for their child
- Key member of school team to support their child
- Vital information about past and current functioning

# Objective

To explore parents' perceptions of their youth's school transition from rehabilitation and how physiotherapy influences the youth's participation and physical functioning during the transition.

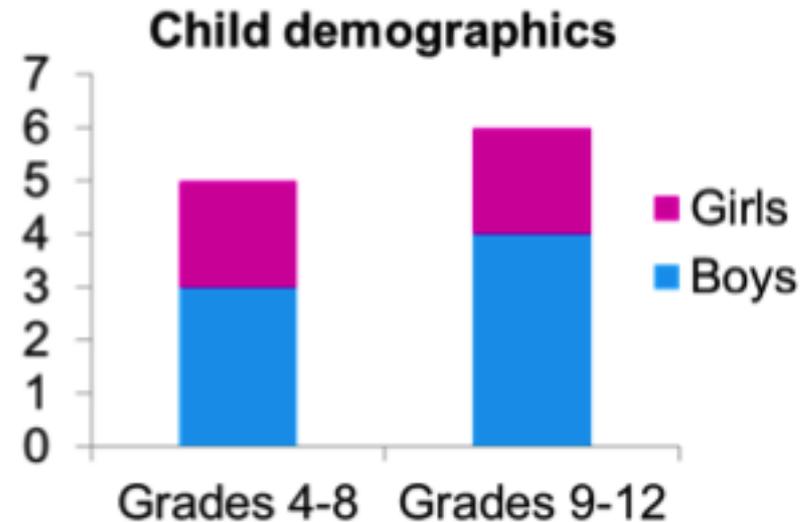


# Participants

Parents of youth with an ABI and were discharged from Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital in the last 12 months and returned to their community school (Grade 4-12).



2 dads and 9 moms  
5 from Greater Toronto Area  
6 from other regions of Ontario



# Methods

- Qualitative study utilizing semi-structured interviews conducted with parents (9 phone, 2 in person).
- Interviews were transcribed verbatim and imported into NVivo 10.0 software program.
- Transcripts were analyzed, with data divided into meaningful units. Subcategories were organized into four themes.



# Examples of Interview Questions

1) Following your child's discharge from rehabilitation, how would you describe your child's return to school? Would you share with me a situation or experience during that time?

2) With respect to physical abilities and mobility, describe for me how things are going for your child? Which activities were important for your child to participate in; which were difficult; were they excluded from activities? Why?

# Four Main Themes

## 1. Physiotherapy: Supporting the transition to school

- *"The other obstacle would be that he probably needed to continue with therapies and was a little bit burnt out after being at rehab"*
- *PT needs to be "presented in such a way that it is about fitness and mobility"*

# Four Main Themes

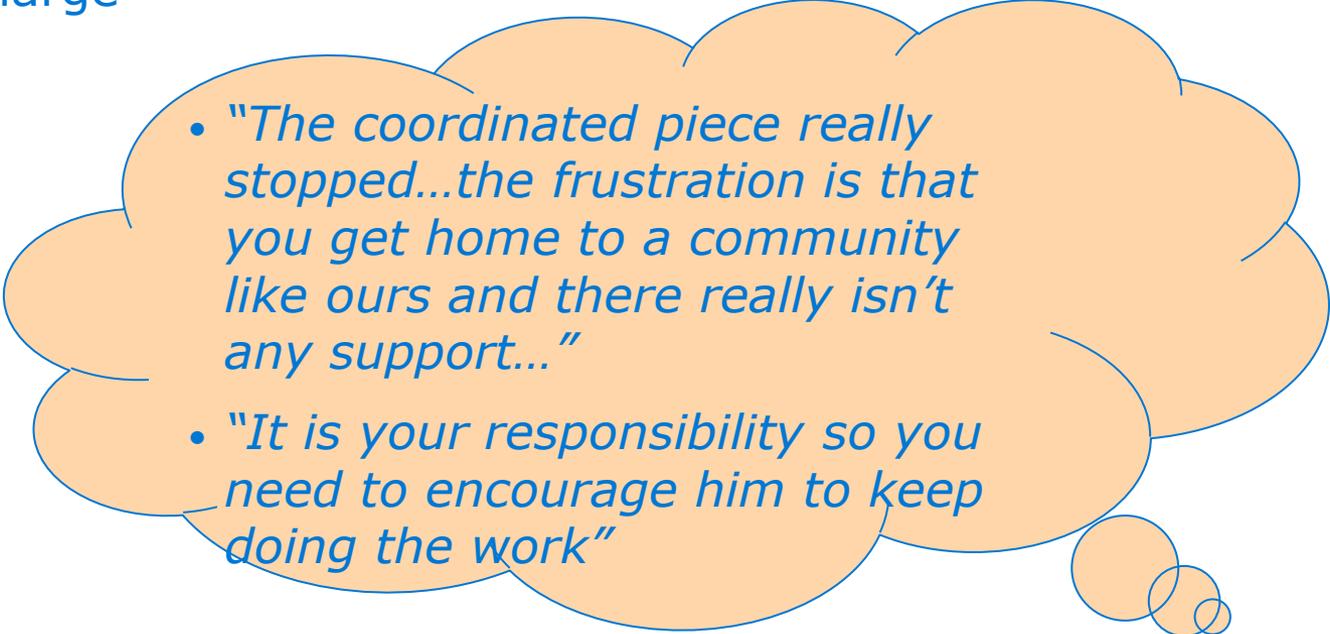
## 2. Keeping up and fitting in

- *"He is kind of wonky as soon as he gets up...catches himself...fallen on the way to school..he says his basketball skills are really weak..he doesn't seem to think he is as good as he was."*
- *"In the very beginning he had these initial insecurities...not mentally, but from a physical point of view with his peers..."*

# Four Main Themes

## 3. Parents' new roles, adjusting to a new normal

- Advocate, Educator, Coordinator & Motivator
- Isolation: unknown expectations, continuity and guidance after discharge

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- *"The coordinated piece really stopped...the frustration is that you get home to a community like ours and there really isn't any support..."*
  - *"It is your responsibility so you need to encourage him to keep doing the work"*

# Four Main Themes

## 4. The Right School Support

- *"the school was very involved in the beginning...which helped them understand the big picture"*
- *"teachers were very receptive to recommendations...as difficult as it was for us to find out what worked and didn't...it is the same for them."*

# Conclusions

- Highlights the unique needs of youth with ABI and the importance of social interaction combined with fitness and physical activity with their peers.
- Important to consider and be mindful of the unique challenges and the emotional impact affecting parents of a youth with an ABI.

# Relevance to Practice

Implications for physiotherapists include:

1. Improved collaboration with community partners to motivate youth with their peers
  2. Engage youth with their peers early on in the rehabilitation process
  3. Ongoing support for parents throughout the transition
- Transition is complex and strategies should be supportive and responsive.

# Limitations

- Youth's perceptions were not captured
- Participants were recruited from one urban rehabilitation hospital, where the researchers were practicing Physiotherapists
- Small convenient sample size.
- Participants were not categorized based on severity level

# References

1. Canadian Institute for Health Information. Head Injuries in Canada: A Decade of Change (1994-1995 to 2003-2004)2006 [cited 2014 Nov 4]:[1-2 pp.]. Available from: [https://secure.cihi.ca/free\\_products/ntr\\_head\\_injuries\\_2006\\_e.pdf](https://secure.cihi.ca/free_products/ntr_head_injuries_2006_e.pdf).
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# Thank You

- The parents for their sharing of experiences and their time
- University of Toronto – Department of Physical Therapy
- Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital
  - Collaborative Practice
  - Brain Injury Rehabilitation Team (BIRT)

