

## Conference Presentation Abstract

### Title:

Clinical Guidelines for the Care of Persisting Symptoms after Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

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### Summary:

The overall objective was to create a guideline that can be used by healthcare professionals to implement evidence-based, best practice care of individuals who incur a mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) and experience persisting symptoms. Persisting symptoms are a common complication of mTBI; 10 to 15% of patients will continue to experience significant symptoms beyond the normal recovery period, which can include post-traumatic headache, sleep disturbance, disorders of balance, cognitive impairments, fatigue, and mood disorders. Currently, best practice treatment is not clearly defined for this complex group who may even exhibit worsening of symptoms or emergence of additional symptoms following injury. Therefore, the following clinical questions were asked: Can a management plan be developed to screen for patients at high-risk of persisting symptoms and, once identified, to treat these symptoms?

To achieve this goal, a search for existing clinical practice guidelines (CPGs) addressing mTBI was carried out. Next, a systematic review of the literature evaluating effectiveness of treatments for persistent symptoms was conducted. A search for CPGs and systematic reviews from outside of the TBI field providing guidance on management of the most common persistent symptoms was also completed. An expert consensus conference was held where healthcare professionals representing a wide range of disciplines from across Canada and abroad were brought together to review the existing guidance and evidence and to attempt to develop a comprehensive guideline. Although several methodologically sound CPGs were identified, only one focused on mTBI and that document primarily dealt with acute management. Thus, there is a clear need for guidance on the care of patients with persisting symptoms. CPGs from outside of the TBI field were found for the symptom categories: sleep disturbances, fatigue, mood disorders, and cognitive deficits. Although the mTBI evidence base was found to be limited, by adapting recommendations from CPGs addressing TBI or symptoms that commonly persist following mTBI in general, as well as by developing new recommendations based on available evidence and clinical expertise, a clinical guideline was created to ameliorate this practice gap. The guideline includes recommendations on assessment, diagnosis and management of persistent symptoms after mTBI. In addition, the recommendations are accompanied by numerous resources and tools to aid clinicians.

### Learning Objectives:

The objective of the presentation is to educate and advise healthcare professionals on how to implement evidence-based care of patients with mTBI experiencing persisting symptoms. Persisting symptoms are a common complication; however, best practice treatment for these patients has not been clearly defined. Therefore, an expert consensus group representing a wide range of disciplines has developed recommendations aimed at screening for patients at high-risk of persisting symptoms and treating the most common symptoms. A treatment algorithm will be presented and learning outcomes will include how and when to provide follow-up care, seek referrals, and deliver appropriate treatment options.