

Do we need to be Trauma-informed when working with ABI?

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Background

Those who experience acquired brain injury (ABI), often report their experience is one of a catastrophic, life-changing event causing dramatic changes in all areas of life. It is a traumatic event disrupting the individual's biological, cognitive, and emotional functioning plus their identity, relationships, and social interactions. Healthcare Professionals (HCPs) often focus on the physical and cognitive changes, but experienced trauma is often misunderstood. The main objective of this research was to help understand how trauma, and the nature of the trauma, may impact a person's emotional expression.

Method

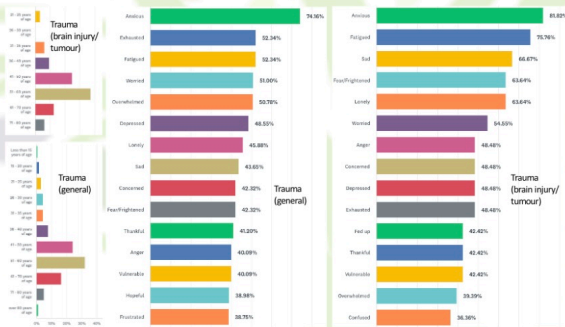
Using an online platform [Survey Monkey], a short questionnaire was constructed and promoted via social media. Participants were asked whether they had experienced trauma and to describe it if they wished. They were asked to select, from a long list, 18 emotion words, they would use to help describe a feeling/emotion about any aspect of their life (not necessarily at that point in time).

Results

660 people completed the survey.

449 reported a trauma with 33 reporting an ABI. Those reporting trauma reported the emotion "anxious" most frequently. "Anxious" was also the most frequently reported emotion in nABI.

The ranking of the other 17 emotion words was different in ABI compared to nABI with 15 out of the 18 emotion words being 'negative' emotion words, anxious (75%) and exhausted (52%) being most frequently selected.



Conclusions

This study helps to highlight how, by become more trauma-informed and encouraging people to express emotions, HCPs can better understand the traumatizing impact of an ABI and the impact on all areas of a person's life. It also helps to highlight the importance of addressing emotional health in providing a more person-centred rehabilitation programme for people after brain injury.



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