
Glossary of Terms

Advocacy

The act of pleading or arguing for something on behalf of a person.

Affect

The observable emotional condition of an individual at any given time.

Agnosia

A difficulty with recognizing familiar objects perceived through one or more of the senses, such as difficulty recognizing an object visually or by touching it. This is not due to aphasia.

Agraphia

Inability to express self through writing.

Alexia

Inability to read.

Amnesia

Lack of memory about events occurring during a particular period of time.

Aneurysm

A balloon-like deformity in the wall of a blood vessel. The wall weakens as the deformity grows larger, and may eventually burst, causing a hemorrhage (bleeding).

Anoxia

Lack of oxygen to tissue, particularly to the brain, which may result from trauma or toxic substances. Results in brain damage or damage of central nervous system.

Aphasia

The inability to use and/or understand language. Expressive aphasia is an inability to express oneself, even though one knows what one wants to say. Receptive aphasia is the inability to understand or comprehend what someone else is saying.

Apraxia

Inability to sequence movements to perform purposeful acts or manipulate objects.

Brainstem

An area at the base of the brain before the spinal cord begins that contains several centres vital to consciousness and life. It is the origin of all nerves to the face—controlling sight, smell, hearing, taste, swallowing, and movements of the eye and face.

Cerebrospinal Fluid (CSF)

A clear, continuously produced and reabsorbed fluid that surrounds the brain and fills the ventricles within the brain and circulates down the spinal cord. Blockage of its circulation leads to hydrocephalus. A CSF leak can lead to brain infection (meningitis).

Cognition

Ability to perceive, understand, organize, recall, problem-solve, reason, and make judgments in response to daily activities.

Cognitive rehabilitation

Therapy programs to help a person having problems with perception, memory, thinking, and problem-solving. The person learns strategies and skills to help improve functioning. The interventions are based on an assessment and understanding of the person's brain-behaviour deficits.

Coma

A state of deep unconsciousness.

Confabulation

Providing misinformation or embellishing the facts because of gaps in memory.

Cranioplasty

A surgical repair of the skull.

Depression

A mood state marked by sadness, low self-esteem, fatigue, poor appetite, and loss of interest in activities.

Disability

The inability or a limitation in performing tasks, activities, and roles in the manner or within the range considered normal for a person of the same age, gender, culture, and education. It may refer to a physical, mental, or sensory condition.

Edema

Swelling as the result of abnormal build up of fluid in cavities or tissues in the body.

Electrocardiogram (EKG)

A test measuring the electrical activity of the heart. There are no significant side effects.

Electroencephalogram (EEG)

A test measuring the electrical activity of the brain. There are no significant effects.

Emotional Lability

Rapid mood changes that appear as exaggerated responses to events or thoughts and sometimes seem to occur without reason.

Fractures

Broken bones are called open fractures when they penetrate the skin and closed fractures when they do not.

Frontal lobe

The front part of the brain responsible for controlling motor skills (movement) and higher cognitive (thinking) functions.

Glasgow coma scale (GCS)

A system for assessing consciousness level immediately following injury.

Hemorrhage

The bleeding that occurs following trauma as a result of damage to blood vessels in the brain.

Home care

Home-based training and case management services. Home care may include nursing and home health aide services; physical, occupational, and speech therapies; and home counselling services.

Hydrocephalus

A buildup of pressure in the fluid-filled cavities within the brain.

Independent living

A community-based living arrangement designed to maximize an individual's ability to be self-supporting and self-directed.

Intensive Care Unit (ICU)

The hospital unit responsible for the highest level of medical care.

Limbic system

A system within the brain that connects lobes and mediates moods, emotions, motivation, attention, and memory.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)

A machine that uses powerful magnets to take detailed a picture of the brain. No X-rays are used.

Meninges

The three membranes that cover the brain and spinal cord - dura mater (the outermost, toughest, and most fibrous membrane); arachnoid mater (the middle membrane); and pia mater (the innermost membrane that contains the blood vessels).

Muscle tone

The amount of resistance a muscle shows in response to passive stretching.

Neurological examination

An evaluation of the mind, brain, and nerves; usually performed by a physician.

Neurologist

A physician specializing in the nervous system and its disorders.

Neuropsychology

The branch of psychology dealing with the assessment and rehabilitation of brain behaviour.

Occipital lobes

Positioned in the back area of the brain, the occipital lobes are responsible for visual perceptions.

Occupational Therapy (OT)

Assessment and treatment aimed at improvement of activities of daily living. It may involve modifying living or working spaces, use of adaptive devices, or changes to the way you move or do things.

Paralysis

A neurologic muscular weakness to the point of not being able to move. Paralysis causes muscles to become smaller (atrophy).

Parietal lobe

One of the four lobes of the cerebral hemisphere in the brain, located behind the frontal lobes and in front of the occipital lobes.

Perceptual deficits

The difficulty in correctly perceiving visual, spatial, auditory, or tactile (your body's position in space) kinesthetic information.

Perseveration

A meaningless repetition of an act (or words) even after the stimulus that caused the act is removed.

Physiatrist

A physician specializing in physical medicine and rehabilitation.

Prognosis

A prediction of the likely course of a disease or injury and the chances of recovery.

Respite care

A program or plan designed to provide time-limited relief to the family or other primary caregiver from the ongoing responsibilities of caregiving.

Seizure

An uncontrolled discharge of nerve cells, which may spread to other cells nearby or throughout the entire brain. This will affect how a person appears or acts for a short time.

Shunt

A procedure to draw off excessive fluid in the brain. A surgically-placed tube running from the ventricles, which deposit fluid into either the abdominal cavity, heart or large veins of the neck.

Spasticity

An abnormal increase in muscle tone that causes difficulty in movement or coordination.

Spontaneous recovery

Recovery that occurs after a brain injury as a result of the body's natural responses to trauma.

Survivor

An individual who has sustained a brain injury and remains alive.

Temporal lobe

One of the four lobes of the cerebral hemisphere in the brain, lying between the frontal and occipital lobes.

Tracheostomy

An operation in which a surgeon places a breathing tube through the neck, directly into the trachea.

Transitional living services

A nonmedical residential program that provides training for living in a setting of greater independence.

Whiplash

A neck injury due to forceful back-and-forth movement. It most often happens as the result of a motor vehicle accident. This causes a "rattle" effect of the brain within the skull, which can cause bruising of the brain.