INTRODUCTION

My laptop just crashed. Not a software crash where I can just reboot. Crashed. On the floor. Shattered. Why? Because my head doesn’t know what my left hand is doing. And my left hand, well, the whole arm actually, just blithely brushed the laptop off the desk and onto the floor, as I was reaching with my right hand to fetch something.

How ironic that this mishap occurred as I was writing about my TBI (traumatic brain injury). I found my concerns about what I could salvage from my laptop analogous to recovering from a head injury. What data could be retrieved? What would still work? It reminded me of my own self-assessment after suffering brain damage. Could I continue to be a functioning human being?

Almost fifteen years ago I suffered a massive brain hemorrhage resulting in a paralyzing stroke. In a flash, the life I knew was irretrievably gone. But I vowed not to give in to feelings of despair and resolved to throw myself into my recovery. I had to acknowledge the detour in my life plan and set about reinventing who I was. What began as a pounding headache eventually led to my becoming an involuntary member of the fraternity of TBI patients.

The TBI patient club is a nondiscriminating association that “welcomes” 1.4 million new members and bids good bye to 50 thousand annually in the US alone, according to the National Institute of Disorders and Stroke (NINDS, n.d.).

As a TBI patient, you feel vulnerable; you are fearful over lost function and become impatient for your recovery. You long to resume your daily routine, even the mundane tasks you once resented. You wander down any path that offers a ray of hope. You are a patient, but you are not patient—tolerant, uncomplaining, serene. You are an impatient—irritated, anxious, impulsive, impetuous. I was pigeonholed with these hurtful labels: impulsive, impetuous, in denial. Labeling a person is dehumanizing, and

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the author recounts her experience in dealing with recovery from a traumatic brain injury. She shares her insights on the dubious practice of patient labeling. The author also affirms her belief in the role a positive outlook plays in recovery.

Keywords: Compassion, Hope, Label, Patient, Positive Outlook, Recovery, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

INVITED COMMENTARY

There is a Human Being Inside Every Patient

Julia Fox Garrison, Independent Researcher, USA
Smart Agent-Based Hospital Search, Appointment, and Medical Diagnosis
[www.igi-global.com/article/smart-agent-based-hospital-search/73707?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/smart-agent-based-hospital-search/73707?camid=4v1a)