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PHYSICAL HEALTH CO-MORBIDITY IN PATIENTS WITH ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY (ABI), RECEIVING IN-PATIENT NEUROBEHAVIOURAL REHABILITATION

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Background: Patients with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) present with a range of physical health problems. Co-morbid physical conditions can complicate these patients' rehabilitation and also may lead to secondary disabilities. The medical literature provides limited information on the prevalence of physical health issues in patients with ABI.

Methods: We surveyed health records of 64 patients receiving multi-disciplinary rehabilitation at a tertiary Brain Injury Rehabilitation service. The data was collected in an anonymized fashion and analyzed using SPSS version 16.

Results: We analysed data from 64 patients (51 Male, 13 Female). The age range was 21-61 years (Mean 39, S.D. 10.6). Epilepsy was the commonest co-existing physical health condition (47%) amongst these patients. Chronic constipation (20%), peptic ulcer disease (14%), Insulin dependent diabetes mellitus (11%), Asthma/COPD (9%), recurrent urinary tract infection (8%) and hypothyroidism (8%) were the co-existing conditions for which the patients needed treatment. Also dysphasia (38%), dysarthria (34%), dysphagia (28%) and mobility difficulties (37%) were common in this patient group.

Conclusions: These findings have implications for continuing medical education needs for psychiatrists and other health care professionals working in this field. The findings also highlight the need for improved communication and working relationship between psychiatric and general hospital based specialities in order to implement holistic delivery of care for patients with ABI.