



**Acquired
Brain Injury
Network**

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Conference Presentation Abstract ~ Poster

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Title:

Therapy Online: The Benefits of Using a Web-based Videoconferencing Support Group for Family Caregivers of Young Adults with TBI

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Summary:

The purpose of this project was to explore the benefits of using an Internet videoconferencing psychosocial support group for ten family caregivers of people with traumatic brain injuries (TBI). Caregivers were provided with computer equipment and trained to access a password-protected Web site. Using videoconferencing software, two groups of five members each met together with a facilitator online weekly for ten sessions. Transcripts of each session were coded using software for qualitative analysis (NVivo 2.0). Analysis revealed that the group was able to meet the needs of its participants by 1) providing social and emotional support where worries, concerns and coping strategies were discussed; 2) providing a sense of belonging and 'normalizing' the experience of being a caregiver of someone with TBI; 3) providing a venue in which to mutually educate each other about TBI, its management and how to access and advocate for rehabilitative, financial and other needed services; 4) providing strength and encouragement for participants to stand up for their needs as caregivers; and 5) fostering a sense of hope for and celebration of small gains and victories. Overall, participants from both groups found the sessions to be helpful, and both groups decided to continue to provide mutual support through their own self-facilitated sessions.

Outcomes/Objectives:

This presentation will report on:

1. Internet videoconferencing technology as a way to conduct therapy sessions efficiently, effectively and with cost benefits;
2. the consequences of linking family caregivers of people with TBI with each other over the Internet;
3. recommendations for future use of this therapy.