

'Black out for Brain Injury' Awareness Week



A brain injury could change your life and prevent you from doing the things you love.

Ella Scheepers, Manager at Brain Injury Waikato says that a simple bump or blow to the head can disrupt a person's normal brain function.

"Are you aware that 37.7% of all traumatic brain injuries in New Zealand happen due to a fall? Not everyone fully recover, some people could have long term consequences of a fall that shouldn't be a big deal" says Ella.

Symptoms of a brain injury may not appear until days or weeks following the injury. It is imperative that you seek immediate medical attention. Early diagnosis and treatment improves your chances of recovering from this type of injury. Brain injuries are considered to be an invisible injury. Every person responds differently, even a mild brain injury can have devastating impact on a person's life.

Brain Injury Waikato is a charitable organisation that provides advocacy, support and education to people who have sustained a brain injury, their families/whānau and carers throughout Waikato.

The focus for this year's Black out for Brain Injury Awareness Week is 'falls'.

Brain Injury Waikato are raising awareness of brain injury causes and prevention. Brain Injury can have long term consequences which impact the person's quality of life. Brain Injury does not discriminate, it can happen to anyone – anytime –anywhere, a new brain injury occurs every 15 minutes in New Zealand.

Patricia (not her real name) had a fall at age 63, when she fainted and clipped her head on the corner of a dressing table. She went to work the following day, and then went to see her GP two days later.

"I experienced extreme ongoing migraines. On top of that I had to deal with fatigue, a foggy head, and acute noise sensitivity. Things got progressively worse when I experienced vertigo, tinnitus and became irrational and periods of crying, to name a few of the numerous symptoms. The GP told me not to worry, I would get better soon. Unfortunately that wasn't the case for me" says Patricia.

Patricia found the brain injury she had sustained from the fall very difficult to deal with.

"Previously I was a strong, capable working person, very social, belonging to clubs, babysitting, and gardening. This 'new me' was very difficult to deal with. The brain injury totally changed my life. I couldn't work, drive or continue my very active social life. Due to my ongoing symptoms, I was forced to retire at 65, something I hadn't planned. In my family life I had to deal with a reversal of roles, with my adult children. At my very worst times, I thought dying could be easier, however, I reminded myself I had people relying on me" says Patricia.

Patricia had to learn to cope with her new reality. The symptoms started easing after 2 years, helped by medication, physiotherapy, psychology, and the love and support from friends and family.

"The total lack of awareness of the long term consequences of brain injury, make it difficult for others to understand what I am going through on a daily basis, largely because it is invisible. Unless people live with

you, they cannot see, or understand, how a brain injury can impact on everyday functioning years later” says Patricia.

“Brain Injury Waikato has been amazing, just their openness and total acceptance, knowing I can ring anytime and receive help. I appreciate their expertise and warmth, making me feel validated and coming to the office is so comfortable. They have also attended medical appointments with me” says Patricia.

“Brain Injury Waikato, not only understand, they will also help you” says Patricia.

Black out for Brain Injury Awareness Week is 18-22 March

Brain Injury Waikato have an open invitation to clients, whānau, carers, members and community organisations to attend a morning tea at 10.30am on Wednesday, 20 March at the office. Come and listen to Stephanie McLennan, Project Manager Falls Prevention talking about improving your strength and balance to prevent falls. Wear black to this event. For a gold coin donation you will be able to pick up a black wrist band.

Businesses, workplaces, Service and Health Professionals along with schools and community services are encouraged to wear black on the day, and have an event at their office for a gold coin donation. Post photos on your Facebook and share to www.facebook.com/BrainInjuryWaikato

For more information contact Ella on 07 8391191 or email admin@braininjurywaikato.org.nz