

**For ISCHP09, Lausanne**

**Title:** A Way into Empathy: Using Visual and Narrative Methods to See Life from a Patient's Perspective

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**Abstract:** In a study aimed at understanding life with brain injury from the patient's perspective, I gave cameras to patients with brain injury and asked them to take photographs of their lives—including things that hindered or helped their recovery. Patients then met with me to talk about their photographs. Narrative analysis of photographs and interview text resulted in visual illness narratives that provide emotionally powerful insights into lived experience with brain injury. For a patient injured a year prior to participating in the study, living with brain injury meant feeling frustration and confusion with himself and his surroundings, as well as living with family and friends who were now frustrated and confused by him. Study results suggest that giving cameras to brain injury patients may enhance their ability to talk about topics that are difficult to articulate or embarrassing. Additionally, patients reported feelings of wholeness, confidence, and pride in producing personal narratives. Engendering visuals related to real lives may help clinicians to feel empathy for patients and be more emotionally attentive in the therapeutic encounter. The approach may help to encourage engagement and mutual learning on the part of providers and brain injury patients alike. The findings suggest a model for listening to brain injury patient stories.