

Title: Contesting Health Policy: Toward a Utopian Vision of Community-based Rehabilitation for Brain Injury

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Abstract: Brain theory and findings from brain research are coalescing. The adult brain's capacity for recovery from injury is now seen as dynamic, with formation of new cells playing a role in recovery of and compensation for lost function. Yet the dominant narrative in brain injury rehabilitation policy remains that adult access to cognitive therapies is not warranted, thus limiting rehabilitation prospects for the more than 5 million individuals in the U.S. living with disabilities from traumatic brain injury, or any injury to the brain from a blow or other outside force. This paper provides a brief review of brain injury epidemiology, rehabilitation policies, and the different entities contesting them; and proposes a view of community-based rehabilitation for chronic brain injury that is grounded in clinical research and reflected in photographs and captions created by individuals with brain injury during a participatory research project to investigate their lived experience. The paper concludes with a call to incorporate evidence from "real world" experience into policy development, and a utopian vision for closing the community integration gap for individuals with brain injury by engaging community entities in efforts to prevent brain injuries and support brain fitness (emotional, social, cognitive, and physical) for all.

Key Words: traumatic brain injury, person-centered care, qualitative research, visual methods, social health, community integration

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