

What is Neuropsychology?

Any type of brain damage, whether due to a stroke, a head injury, etc., can cause people to have problems thinking as clearly as they used to. It may be difficult for them to concentrate or remember things for very long. They may not be able to solve problems as quickly or easily as they could before and their thinking may feel slowed in general. Their friends and family may notice that their personality has changed or they may show poor judgment.

Neuropsychologists are specially trained to gather information about aspects of brain function. To become a neuropsychologist, students must get a second degree after college. This degree may be a Ph.D., meaning that they have completed advanced, independent research along with their clinical training. Another type of degree is a Psy.D., which is given by a professional school, like medical or law school, that specializes in clinical psychology. All neuropsychologists must also complete an internship so that

they can gain additional experience by working with a licensed psychologist. Finally, they take an exam that tests their knowledge of psychology and neuropsychology, much like the exams that doctors take to prove that they have learned enough to practice medicine on their own. The entire process, from graduate school to licensing, can take between 7 and 11 years. Although neuropsychologists have a great deal of special training to diagnose brain disorders, they also have the general training necessary to provide their patients with therapy for other psychological problems.

What happens during a typical appointment? The neuropsychologist may begin by talking with the patient to learn more about how he or she is feeling and what kinds of problems have come up. Generally, the patient is also asked to do several tasks, such as repeating or memorizing words, solving puzzles, or copying designs. The results of the tests may show that there may

be a problem in a certain area of the brain or with a certain aspect of thinking.

In addition to their clinical work, neuropsychologists often do research to learn how they can help people more effectively. They might try to find out if a certain type of therapy is best for a patient with a certain type of problem. Or they might try to determine what factors put a person at risk for an injury or mental disorder so that they can help people avoid such problems in the future.

Finally, it is important for all patients to realize that a neuropsychological exam is routinely done whenever any type of brain damage may have occurred. A visit from a neuropsychologist does not mean that a patient is suspected of being "crazy" or incompetent in any way. It is merely a way of helping the entire treatment team find the best way of addressing the patient's unique needs and concerns.

Contributed by: Alicia Crossland, WSU Psychology Graduate Student.

Moving Soon?

Moving can be very stressful and remembering to give your new address to everyone who needs it may be challenging. SEMTBIS is one of those organizations that needs your current mailing address. Without it, we can't send you updates, invitations, cards, or even this newsletter. Please remember to give **Carole Koviak, RN a call at (313) 745-9737** when you move.

Got Ideas?

Do you have a story or a joke that you would like to tell? Do you write poetry, short stories, or have an interesting personal story? If so, the SEMTBIS staff would like to hear from you! This newsletter is for people who have had a brain injury and their families, so if you have information that you think would be of interest to others please mail:

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