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on

# Serious Injury Care

Ideas, trends and solutions in serious injury care | July 2005 | [www.bayshore.ca](http://www.bayshore.ca)

## Recovery challenges lead to changes and innovation in serious injury home care

By Maddy Roppoli, BSc, RRP

The road to recovery and normal life for people with serious injuries is fraught with challenges. On the one hand, they and their families must deal with the more evident health and personal issues that stem from brain and spinal cord injuries, amputations, severe burns and other debilitating injuries. But on the other hand, they face a host of less obvious difficulties that revolve around the care they receive:

- Managing financial resources needed to pay for care
- Accessing caregivers trained to provide highly specialized care
- Becoming educated about managing their care needs and disability
- Receiving a consistent level of care when moving from hospital to home

As a result, many seriously injured Canadians are looking to local rehabilitation hospitals and providers, patient associations, insurers and home care agencies to deliver innovative solutions. These organizations, in turn, have responded by working more closely together to address the challenges and have begun to develop unique programs that better address the specialized care needs of people with serious injuries.

In terms of acute care, the average hospital stay for a patient with a brain injury can reach \$300,000 in the first year. On

average, post-hospital rehabilitation services cost \$125,000 per year and may be required for many years. The average lifetime cost of care for a person with a brain injury is estimated between \$4 million to \$9 million.

Serious injuries that are sustained as a result of motor vehicle or workplace accidents are covered under special legislative provisions that provide for medical and rehabilitation expenses associated with serious injuries. In Ontario, for example, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board has created a special Serious Injury Program to oversee care provision and funding for injured workers.

Auto insurance legislation across Canada has special provisions and coverage to address the medical costs associated with both the acute and home care needs of people seriously injured in car accidents. Regardless of the local legislative variations, each province recognizes the importance of specialized care and has responded with some form of specialized claims process that links acute care with home care programs.

Much of the care costs for a seriously injured person occur after discharge from a hospital. Although insurance coverage can be quite generous, it has limits and must be carefully managed to ensure that an individual receives all the care needed



in their lifetime. One of the biggest challenges is to properly manage the financial compensation clients with serious injuries receive. Funders and families often turn to professional serious injury case managers and “cost of future care” experts to help develop the right care plan.

“Certainly one of the key roles of service providers, funders and case managers is to help preserve funds and ensure they are directed towards the client’s long term care,” says Jodi Harendorf, Managing Director of Catastrophic Injury Management, an organization that provides case management services for people with serious injuries.

Some provincial insurance plans have predetermined hourly fee schedules that help manage costs. Professional associations like the Ontario Brain Injury Association, Canadian Paraplegic Association and War Amps of Canada can also provide additional programs and services to individuals and families.

### Bayshore Home Health – a leader in serious injury home care

Bayshore Home Health is a Canadian-owned company and has been a trusted provider of home and community care services since 1966. It operates more than 30 offices nationally and works with many organizations that deliver specialized home care services to clients with serious injuries, including workers’ compensation boards, auto insurers, rehabilitation service providers and government care agencies. To learn more about any of the services listed below, please call 1-866-265-1920.

Brain and spinal cord injury care • Wound and burn care • Fracture and amputation care  
Palliative care • 24-hour nursing • Personal care and home support • Serious injury care  
planning • Safety assessments • Teaching • Care coordination with third parties

The logo for Bayshore Home Health. The word "Bayshore" is written in a large, blue, serif font with a wavy underline underneath. Below it, the words "Home Health" are written in a smaller, orange, sans-serif font.

People who have suffered serious injuries often share similar challenges. They are faced with residual impairments that are not only severe but often permanent. Once they arrive home from hospital an ongoing adjustment occurs. For most people with serious injuries this journey is one of ongoing education, rehabilitation and maintenance. This model of home care differs greatly from the model of care that most caregivers are accustomed to.

“Many personal support workers that I work with in the community do not understand the needs of the serious injury client, due to a lack of training and education,” Harendorf says. “They often are not comfortable with this type of reverse model of care. They are more comfortable doing everything for the client instead of enabling them and watching for changes.”

### Caregiver training is essential

While some home care agencies say they have specially trained staff to care for clients with serious injuries, they sometimes are not fully aware of the different role that caregivers must play. Hence, ongoing training for caregivers who deliver home care services is essential.

Mr. K, an Ontario resident who suffered a permanent spinal cord injury, explains: “Many personal support workers do not have experience in working with clients who are directing their own care. They are more experienced in working with seniors who need a high level of personal care.

“Some home care workers do not have the communication skills needed to coach, collaborate with and educate a client with a spinal cord injury. Shorter hospital stays now make it even harder for clients to get all the education they need before discharge. Understanding these needs is a challenge.”

“Hospitals are well aware of the need for specialized caregivers,” says Rita Mabruccho, a social worker for the Spinal Cord Injury Program at Toronto Rehab’s Lyndhurst Centre, which offers a range of education sessions to help patients, their families and spouses, and caregivers work together to meet patients’ care needs after discharge from hospital.

Lyndhurst’s clients are educated and encouraged to direct their own care. However, due to the complex nature of a spinal cord injury and the large amount of knowledge they need to understand about their condition and changes that may occur, knowing how to apply this education must continue on a life-long basis. For this reason, it’s important for caregivers to support their clients’ need for continuing education.

“All serious injury clients require a great deal of education in bowel and bladder care, skin management and wound care,” Mabruccho says.

Specialized training and collaboration is critical to assessing and providing the right level of home care to people with serious injuries. Typically, home care agencies have assigned caregivers without the proper training. However, there are indications this practice is changing. Home care agencies and organizations they collaborate with are realizing that in order to build the most effective treatment and care plans, caregivers need specialized training.

Nevertheless, access to highly specialized caregivers still can be a challenge once patients leave the hospital. Many caregivers have yet to adequately understand the unique needs of clients with serious injuries. In addition, training gaps have existed with many home care agencies. To remedy this problem, some agencies have begun to develop programs that include not only clinical training but also specialized train-

ing in the areas of documentation, communication, and cuing and coaching, as well as bowel, bladder and wound care.

When they are hospitalized with a serious injury, patients receive a highly integrated and consistent level of care from a multidisciplinary team. After discharge, it’s important that this same level of care be continued within the home.

### Care plan needs to be coordinated

“A well-coordinated care plan between the home care agency, discharge planner and family is vital to the quality of care that clients with serious injuries receive,” says Mary Plaudis, Director of Insurance Programs for Bayshore Home Health, a national home care agency.

She adds that Bayshore Home Health’s steadily growing number of clients with serious injuries has led the company to develop its own Serious Injury Home Care Program. The goal of the program is to provide a high level of specialized care, while working in collaboration with case managers, discharge planners, auto insurance adjusters, workers’ compensation boards and government home care programs.

While specialized hospital and acute care rehabilitation programs have done much in the last decade to advance the care of people with serious injuries, there are improvements still to be made to Canadian home care programs if they are to deliver higher levels of specialized care. Innovations in training and collaborative initiatives like those currently underway at Bayshore Home Health will help set the standard for new and innovative solutions to providing the best care for people with serious injuries.

*Maddy Roppoli, has more than 20 years of experience in the fields of disability management and health and wellness.*

*Focus on Serious Injury Care* is published by Bayshore Home Health for its serious injury clients and health care professionals. The views and opinions contained in *Focus on Serious Injury Care* are not necessarily those of Bayshore Home Health. For more information about this newsletter or to submit story ideas, please contact Bayshore Home Health’s Marketing Department at 905.822.8075/1.800.668.9490 or email [mkrunic@bayshore.ca](mailto:mkrunic@bayshore.ca).

