2021 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
COVER
A Virtual Success!!

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THE VOICE
OF
BRAIN INJURY

2021 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
A VIRTUAL SUCCESS!
The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts was very excited to offer our Annual Conference VIRTUALLY for the first time - allowing us to serve a much broader audience from the safety and comfort of your home or office!

“Virtual Conference” continued on page 3
The Impact of COVID-19 on BIA-MA
CEO Nicole M. Godaire

During the unprecedented times due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been my honor to lead BIA-MA through change and uncertainty. Throughout forced closures, months of remote work, and tentative reopening plans, BIA-MA adjusted by swiftly implementing virtual formats, ongoing email marketing campaigns, and targeted social media campaigns to advocate for all those affected by brain injury.

In the fundraising arena, in spite of the challenges, BIA-MA kept donors engaged in our mission and generated over $315,000. We were able to move our traditionally in-person fundraising events to a virtual format required by continually changing guidelines.

BIA-MA hosted over 305 virtual support groups and 83 virtual recreation events, reaching over 3,784 attendees. In addition, the BIA-MA 39th Annual Brain Injury Conference was held for the first time in virtual format! During these virtual events, survivors, family caregivers, and professionals shared discussions on brain injury, coping skills, respite during social isolation, and finding joy in every day. Being isolated doesn’t have to mean being alone!

I want to thank the staff for quickly pivoting to the work-from-home environment at the beginning of the pandemic, and leadership for smoothly implementing the technology required. We now find ourselves in a middle-ground transitioning to a space where vaccinations, masks, and hybrid formats are necessary to keep our brain injury community safe.

Looking forward, BIA-MA plans to continue to follow Federal and State guidelines while providing for the brain injury community.

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BIA-MA believes this conference was a success for many reasons including Keynote speakers Pat and Tammy McLeod, 27 workshops, and an "Exhibitor Hall" showcasing interactive community resources and more! The conference attendees widely agreed that the virtual format allowed more opportunities to attend the sessions they wanted over the in-person conference. And exhibitors were excited to have virtual access to a broader audience. The technology worked well - after all, we are all used to Zoom - and the presenters, as always, were fantastic!

On March 24th & 25th brain injury survivors, professionals, families, and caregivers gathered online for BIA-MA's Virtual Brain Injury Conference for 2 full days. The conference featured something for everyone affected by brain injury, including educational workshops, sponsors and exhibitors, poster presentations, and multiple learning and networking opportunities.

The organization was proud to host Pat & Tammy McLeod for this keynote titled “Hit Hard: One Family's Journey of Letting Go of What Was and Learning to Live Well with What Is”. Their son, Zach, suffered a brain injury playing football, survived emergency brain surgery, but was left with lasting effects. Their story reveals many of the physical, emotional, and relational challenges of living with an ambiguous loss - the experience of both having and not having someone the way you once had them.

BIA-MA would like to thank the members of the Annual Conference Planning Committee for the outstanding content of this year’s conference.

The organization would also like to thank our sponsors including Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), NeuroRestorative, Encompass Health, Seven Hills, Supportive Living, Inc., Tempus Unlimited, CIL, and OpenSky for making this event possible.
The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA) is attending hearings on the cognitive rehabilitation bill (S629/H1078) and Head Injury Treatment Services trust fund bill (S941/H1564).

Cognitive Rehabilitation Bill

The cognitive rehabilitation bill will ensure that commercial health insurance plans include cognitive rehabilitation services related to treatment for a brain injury. In January 2021, the legislature passed, and the Governor signed an omnibus health care bill that requires commercial health insurance plans, the Group Insurance Commission (GIC) and MassHealth to cover cognitive rehabilitation specifically for COVID-19 patients. Now is the time to make cognitive rehabilitation a mandated benefit for all individuals with acquired brain injury.

Head Injury Treatment Services Trust Fund Bill

The Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP) is funded through the Head Injury Treatment Services (HITS) trust fund (Line Item # 4120-6002) and the state budget (Line Item # 4120-6000). The HITS trust fund collects mandatory civil fines for speeding violations, Operating Under the Influence of Alcohol and Driving Under the Influence of Drugs offences (OUI/DUI) and Driving to Endanger.

Over the last five years and significantly this last year during the COVID-19 pandemic, the HITS fund has decreased dramatically due to decreased driving and low traffic violations in Massachusetts. To increase funding, the bill will authorize the following fines to be deposited in the HITS trust fund: increase fines for speeding violations to $100; 100% of revenue collected for OUI/DUI offenses; and stagger and increase fines for multiple offenses of OUI/DUI; and $50 of fines collected under the Hands-Free law.

Advocacy Campaign

We are also looking for individuals to submit their story to members of the two Committees that will vote on the two bills. Committee members want to know how passage of these bills will help their constituents! If you are interested in sharing your experience on either bill, please contact Kelly Buttiglieri, Public Policy Manager, at kbuttiglieri@biama.org
Katie suffered an arteriovenous malformation (AVM) hemorrhage when she was eight years old. She lost her abilities to speak and eat, and said Katie, “I had to learn how to walk all over again, how to hold my head up by myself, and how to use my communication device. I had to learn to do a lot of things again.” Now Katie understands almost everything that is spoken to her. She uses an augmented communication device to help her communicate and share her great sense of humor with us. The look on Katie’s face is almost always a smile!

Katie and her mother Joan, regularly attend support group meetings, activities and events, and are active members in the survivor community. Katie is the captain of “Katie’s Angels”, her team for the Cere-Bration Walk. Roll. Run., which to date has raised over $10,000 in support of BIA-MA and those we serve. Her best advice, “Never Give Up.”

A big thank you to Katie, Joan, and her Angels!

Chesa Conrad came to BIA-MA in 2015 with over 10 years of nonprofit marketing and fundraising experience. As Marketing & Development Manager, Chesa is responsible for all fundraising and external communications initiatives for BIA-MA, including our “coming soon” new website, social media efforts, the 2021 Cere-Bration Walk. Roll. Run., and the recent Annual Golf Classic.

She holds a BA in Public Relations and Communications from Alfred University in central NY state. Chesa enjoys working with people, telling their stories, and establishing the tone and brand for BIA-MA that you all know. She loves animals, antique houses, and appreciates binge-worthy TV. She spends her time outside of work on great adventures with her son and husband, visiting family and friends, and spoiling her cat, Brady.

Chesa is often the person “behind the scenes”, but always willing to jump in when needed – thank you for all you do Chesa!
The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA) continues to provide exceptional and intriguing virtual programming during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Educational Programs

In April 2021, BIA-MA launched our **Introductory Acquired Brain Injury Educational Series**, which included four programs designed for staff who are currently providing services to individuals with ABI, as well as those who may be new to the field of brain injury. These programs included content that went over what an acquired brain injury is, how to communicate with persons with an acquired brain injury, and understanding and responding to challenging behaviors related to acquired brain injury. If someone found themselves wanting more in-depth knowledge after completing this series, we would encourage them to explore our Acquired Brain Injury Clinical Continuing Education Series.

**Our Introductory ABI Education Series and Acquired Brain Injury Clinical Continuing Education Series** will be offered starting November 2021 and will run through June 2022. Be sure to visit [www.biama.org/abiprograms](http://www.biama.org/abiprograms) for the most up-to-date information and registration links for these offerings.

In addition to our introductory and clinical programs, BIA-MA offers a free 6-part survivor educational series, called **Thrivers Workshops**. Brain injury survivors often face unique challenges when it comes to organizational skills. Our Thriver's workshops explore tips, tools & strategies and help survivors become more organized! Topics discussed range from, conquering and organizing clutter and paperwork, meal planning, as well as time management. For more information on any of BIA-MA’s programs and trainings visit [www.biama.org/education](http://www.biama.org/education) or email education@biama.org
Support Groups

During the spring of 2021, BIA-MA continued our dedication to transitioning support group meetings and recreational events to a virtual platform while our offices are/were remote. BIA-MA staff hosted over 100 virtual support groups and special events last quarter, reaching over 1,100 people. Together survivors, family caregivers, and professionals shared discussions on brain injury, coping skills, respite during social isolation, and finding joy every day.

Funding from the Statewide Head Injury Program and other sources allowed BIA-MA to offer a variety of virtual experiences for survivors. Private on-line activities included guided tours of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, painting classes, building succulent terrariums, yoga, tai chi, meditation, and writing classes to express ourselves more fully.

For more information on our events and activities please visit www.biama.org/groups
Researchers at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital in Boston are developing a new questionnaire to understand the difficulties persons with brain injuries have returning to their daily lives. The questionnaire is called the Traumatic Brain Injury-Participatory Computerized Adaptive Test or TBI-PCAT for short. The TBI-PCAT will help persons with brain injury, medical and rehabilitation professionals, and researchers communicate about and address challenges people face engaging in their communities, at work, school, and in meaningful relationships. The study is led by Drs. Joseph Giacino and Lewis Kazis, leaders in brain injury research and outcome measure development. The research team will be working on this project over the next four years. Below, Drs. Giacino and Kazis respond to a few questions about their study.

Would you please tell the readers of the BIA-MA newsletter about your background and why you chose to develop the TBI PCAT?

**Dr. Joseph Giacino** - I am a clinical neuropsychologist at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital and a professor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Harvard Medical School. I have worked with persons with TBI for over 30 years. Much of my work has focused on assessing and treating persons with severe brain injuries. I am excited to develop the TBI-PCAT because it will help researchers and clinicians better understand the challenges people face in their daily lives following brain injury with a range of severities.

**Dr. Lewis Kazis** - I am a Professor of Health Law, Policy, and Management at Boston University and the Research Director at the Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital's Outcome Center, and a visiting professor at Harvard Medical School. I have spent the last 30 years developing questionnaires that measure health-related quality of life using advanced measurement methods. I have worked closely with advocacy groups to understand and capture survivor experiences using patient-reported outcome questionnaires. I am looking forward to working closely with persons with brain injuries to learn about their experiences and develop a patient-centered questionnaire.

What is the TBI-PCAT?
The TBI-PCAT is a questionnaire designed to measure a person’s participation in meaningful roles (work, school, community) and relationships (family, friends, romantic partners) after brain injury. The TBI-PCAT will use computer algorithms based on artificial intelligence (AI) to ask questions based on prior answers of the respondent. The AI method allows individuals to only answer questions relevant to them, making the test short and efficient.

Why is this important?
In addition to recovery of movement, talking, and thinking, we want to help people engage in their communities and with loved ones as they wish. Outcome measurement tools like the TBI-PCAT help clinicians work with persons with brain injury to identify areas of concern and monitor progress over time. Researchers use these tools to find the best treatments. The best measurement tools are efficient, accurate, and reliable. To develop a high-quality measure, we will work closely with persons with brain injury to find out what is most important to them. We will then use rigorous methods to build and test the questionnaire for its reliability and validity. The study is supported by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (grant # 90DPCP0008), which is a Center within the Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services.

Check back with the BIA-MA newsletter over the next four years for updates on the research team's progress of the TBI-PCAT. If you would like to participate in our research, please call 617-952-6301 and leave us a voicemail, or go to https://rally.partners.org/study/participationaftertbi and click “I am interested”.

BIA-MA IS PROUD TO PARTNER WITH SPAULDING REHABILITATION NETWORK AND IS THANKFUL FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF THE BIA-MA MISSION.
2021 BIA-MA ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC
June 21, 2021

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Heads Up Headlines - FALL 2021
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* Falmouth Road Race runners
The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) and the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts have received a federal grant for three years to implement “Bridges Between”. The project will build connections between the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment communities, strengthen services for families and individuals living with TBI and SUD and conduct statewide trainings for professionals in both fields.
After brain injury, rehabilitation is one of the most important steps in the recovery process. Our hospitals offer innovative therapies, a specialized team and advanced technologies to give patients the confidence and strength they need to return to their community.

Learn more at ehc.rehab/bima20

NeuroRestorative Massachusetts is a leading provider of post-acute rehabilitation and support services for individuals with brain injuries and other neurological challenges. In a variety of locations and settings, we offer a continuum of care through our community-based programs.

- Neurorehabilitation
- Neurobehavioral
- Supported Living
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800-743-6802
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As a leading provider of services for people with brain injuries, we share in their mission of promoting equality, empowerment, and independence of individuals living with brain injury and their communities of support.

Vinfen transforms lives by building the capacity of individuals, families, organizations, and communities to learn, thrive, and achieve their goals. Our services and advocacy promote the recovery, resiliency, habilitation, and self-determination of the people we serve. As a human services leader, we strive to be the provider, employer, and partner of choice.

Vinfen IS PROUD TO SUPPORT
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Do you know someone who would flourish in a more independent living environment?

Together, Advocates and Supportive Living, Inc. partner to provide the highest quality of housing, services, and programs to meet the challenges of brain injury survivors. Our goal is to ensure people live their lives to the fullest.

How We Help
• Affordable, Supportive Residential Programs
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Eligibility for Our Supportive Living Program
• Potential to achieve greater independence
• Must qualify for subsidized housing
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• Over 18 years of age

Learn More
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Personalized solutions at home and in the heart of the community.
Seven Hills NeuroCare (SHNC) provides post-acute brain injury rehabilitation to survivors of acquired brain injuries and people with neurodevelopmental disorders.

SHNC’s multidisciplinary team of licensed and certified professionals offers individualized services to fit within people’s home- and community-based routines. These services include cognitive rehabilitation, rehabilitation counseling, behavior analysis, psychology, speech language therapy, nursing, assistive technology, and coaching/aid with daily living skills.

People supported also have access to day programming, and workforce readiness and employment with Seven Hills ASPIRE!, and individual psychotherapy and psychiatry through Seven Hills Behavioral Health.

At SHNC, our goal is to help people reclaim their lives, and maximize their independence and recovery in the community. To learn more, contact: Dr. Jonathan Worcester, Vice President of Seven Hills NeuroCare, at 508.320.4991, or jworcester@sevenhills.org.
Together we do more.
Upcoming BIA-MA Events

2021 FALL INTRO TO ABI:
Challenging Behaviors Related to ABI November 3 & 10, 2021
How to Communicate with Persons with ABI November 9, 2021

2022 ANNUAL CONFERENCE March 30 & 31, 2022

Learn more at www.biama.org or call 508-475-0032

YOUR FALL 2021 NEWSLETTER HAS ARRIVED!!