



OF MOTORCYCLES, TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY,
NATASHA RICHARDSON, AND MY YOUNGER BROTHER

From: New York attorney Gary E. Rosenberg (personal injury and accident attorney and lawyer; serving Brooklyn Queens Bronx; Queens Accident Lawyer)

One New Years Eve some 20 years ago my younger brother was walking around Montreal when he slipped and fell on ice, hitting his head. A stubborn sort, my brother refused medical attention, until he began to lose feeling on one side of his body. Rushed to a local hospital, it was his good fortune that the head neurosurgeon was on duty that night. My brother had suffered a subdural hematoma, or brain bleed. His life was saved by emergency surgery where his skull was opened up, and the bleeding stopped.

Former Congressman and musician Sonny Bono (of Sonny & Cher fame) died on January 5, 1998. He struck a tree while skiing in Nevada, and hit his head. He died instantly of massive brain injuries.

Actress Natasha Richardson, just 45 years-old, recently suffered a small tumble on a ski slope in Quebec. Like Sonny Bono (and my brother) she was not wearing a helmet. Yet she hit her head. She suffered no immediate symptoms, yet some four hours later her condition worsened and she died shortly afterwards.

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) -- a blow to the head that disturbs the normal function of the brain -- occurs regularly in recreational and organized sports. About 200,000 persons suffer traumatic brain injury every year. While not usually fatal, sometimes a blood vessel in the brain gets broken, and bleeding and death can swiftly follow. Not all blows or jolts to the head result in TBI. The severity of TBI may range from "mild" - such as a brief change in mental status or consciousness - to "severe" - an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury.

A person with mild TBI may remain conscious or may experience a short loss of consciousness. Other symptoms of mild TBI include headache, confusion, lightheadedness, dizziness, blurred vision, ringing in the ears, fatigue or lethargy, a change in sleep patterns, behavioral or mood changes, and trouble with memory, concentration, attention, or thinking. A person with more severe TBI may also have a headache that gets worse or does not go away, repeated vomiting or nausea, convulsions or seizures, an inability to wake up, enlargement of one or both pupils of the eyes, slurred speech, weakness or numbness in the arms and/or legs, loss of coordination, and increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation.

TBI can cause a wide range of functional changes affecting thinking, sensation, language, and/or emotions. It can also cause epilepsy and increase the risk for conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and other brain disorders that become more prevalent with age.

According to The Centers for Disease Control, the leading causes of TBI are:

Falls (28%);

Motor vehicle-traffic crashes (20%);

Struck by/against events (19%); and

Assaults (11%).

Football and basketball lead the number of TBI-related emergency room visits, joining the recreational sports of skiing, bicycling, driving all-terrain vehicles, and playground activities.

So, when riding a motorcycle or bicycle, wear a helmet. When skiing, snow or skate-boarding or rollerblading, wear a helmet. Parents, make your children wear a helmet.

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