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Long-term Parental and Family Adaptation Following Pediatric Brain Injury

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Objective To determine whether parents of children with traumatic brain injuries (TBI) report increased injury-related burden, distress, and family dysfunction and to examine the effects of attrition on the results. **Methods** Children with severe TBI, moderate TBI, and orthopedic injuries were followed at six time points from baseline to 6 years after injury. Parents completed measures of injury-related burden, psychological distress, and family functioning at each assessment. Mixed model analysis was used to examine long-term changes. **Results** Attrition was higher among families in the severe TBI group with lower burden thereby amplifying group differences. The severe TBI group reported higher injury-related burden over time after injury than the other groups. Family functioning was moderated by social resources. Families of children with severe TBI and low resources reporting deteriorating functioning over the follow-up interval. **Conclusions** Although environmental advantages moderate long-term effects on family functioning, families of children with severe TBI experience long-standing injury-related burden.

Key words: brain injury; family adaptation; stressors; support.

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