

Barrow finds correlation in TBI and concussions

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Physicians and researchers at Barrow Neurological Institute have identified a link between domestic violence and traumatic brain injury. The findings could have important implications in the treatment of domestic violence survivors, both in medical and social service communities. The research, led by Dr. Glynnis Zieman, was published in the July issue of *Journal of Neurotrauma*.

"Head injuries are among the most common type suffered in domestic violence, which can lead to repetitive brain injuries that often have chronic, life-changing effects, much like what we see in athletes. We found that 88 percent of these victims suffered more than one head injury as a result of their abuse and 81 percent reported too many injuries to count," says Dr. Zieman.

The research was conducted at Barrow Concussion and Brain Injury Center, where a specialty program has been established to address [traumatic brain injury](#) (TBI) in the domestic violence survivor. The program is believed to be the first of its kind in the nation. Dr. Zieman and her team performed a retrospective chart review of more than one hundred patients seen through the program to obtain data for this research.

While concussions have been a significant topic in sports, Barrow has taken special interest in concussions and domestic violence. Barrow experts say that women who previously suffered silently are becoming more aware of the real issue of concussions from their abuse.

The Barrow program provides both medical care and social service assistance for homeless victims who have sustained a TBI as a result of domestic violence. It was created after Barrow social worker Ashley Bridwell and physicians identified a three-way link between homelessness, domestic violence and TBI. The medical team has found many victims are suffering from a full spectrum of side effects that can lead to the loss of a job, income, and eventually homelessness.

"This is the third chapter in the concussion story," says Dr. Zieman. "First it was veterans, then it evolved into professional athletes, and now we're identifying brain injuries in victims of domestic violence. And, unlike well-paid football players, these patients rarely have the support, money and other resources needed to get help."

The eventual goal of the research is to expand brain injury awareness and offer treatment more readily into the care of the [domestic violence](#) survivor, both in and out of the shelter.

Additional research is underway to further investigate the severity and long term effects of injuries sustained in this population.

Provided by St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center

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