

TSNotes

Quarterly Newsletter of the Trauma Survivors Network



From the Editor

Dear Readers,

In this edition of TSNotes, we have highlighted the resources available on our website. We also welcome our new TSN sites, and feature a survivor story from University of Tennessee Medical Center, Knoxville's TSN.

I hope you enjoy this edition and as always, feedback is welcome.

Elizabeth Wysocki, MS
National TSN Coordinator

TSN

The mission continues...



The Trauma Survivors Network, a program of the American Trauma Society, exists to develop and sustain a community of patients, families and loved ones, and healthcare

professionals connecting with one another to rebuild the lives of individuals following traumatic injury. The Trauma Survivors Network, working in partnership with hospitals around the country, foresees a time when all survivors of traumatic injury and their families, wherever they live, are able to receive personalized support and assistance as they work to rebuild their lives after serious injury, from moments after injury and hospitalization through the rehabilitation process, and into their daily lives.

We are happy to report that over 60 trauma centers have signed on to become TSN sites. It is very important to the American Trauma Society that we continue to work on behalf of survivors by increasing the amount of at TSN Trauma Centers across the country. Our mission is that survivors will not only find support in the hospital but after discharge and throughout their recovery. If you joined the TSN early in our development, you might want to check back in and see if we have reached a Trauma Center near you.

Have you visited our website?

Find out more about the TSN

The TSN website is a fantastic resource for anyone that wants to learn more about the TSN and access resources. You will find more information about TSN Trauma Centers, TSN programs, survivors stories and shared peer support. There are more resources for TSN Coordinators that will help support TSN implementation.

Also- there are more resources for patients and families that will help during hospitalization and recovery.

Community Forum

Here you can chat with other survivors, share resources and recovery experiences.

Survivor and Family Stories

Here you can find inspirational stories written by survivors and family members.

Recovery Assessment

The recovery assessment is designed for patients who are recovering from traumatic injury. The questions will help survivors understand strengths, resources and potential problems faced during recovery. Easy to read printable results are available after taking the assessment.

NextSteps Self Management

NextSteps is a six week online class that is designed to provide survivors with the tools and confidence to make steps forward in their recovery. The class is free to all survivors and moderated by a professional.

See all this and more at www.traumasurvivorsnetwork.org



Stay Connected

Check out our [website](http://www.traumasurvivorsnetwork.org) and sign up to receive our newsletter.

Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

Welcome to our new TSN Sites

We are excited to welcome the following new sites:

New Hanover Regional Medical Center

Texas Health Harris Methodist

Mercy Hospital St. Louis

New York Presbyterian/Queens

Paoli Hospital

Good Samaritan Medical Center

Geisinger Community Medical Center

Aurora Medical Center

Yale New Haven Hospital



Join the TSN

Interested in establishing a TSN Chapter in your trauma center?

Join the TSN and become one of a growing number of hospitals around the country that are setting the standard for trauma care. By becoming a TSN facility, your center will be on the leading edge of trauma care and stand out from competing facilities. We look forward helping trauma centers and those affected by traumatic injuries.

Call ATS at 800-556-7890 or email us at admin@traumasurvivorsnetwork.org

Please also visit our website

www.traumasurvivorsnetwork.org

SURVIVORS CORNER

Trauma Survivor, John Nehl's: Life After Trauma

September 10, 2014

I was an avid bicyclist and racer. I would ride 50 miles a day, hard ride, every day, at least six days a week. I had a carbon fiber bike with electronic shifting and a full race setup. Beautiful bike. On that fateful day I was nearing the end of my ride – 49.5 miles in with a half mile to go. As I have no memory of my accident I have been told that I hit the back of a truck that was parked in the middle of the road. I hit head first and took the full force of the impact on the top of my head. My computer says I was riding at 41 km/hr at the time of impact. My bike broke into four pieces. The force of the hit telescoped down my spine causing burst fractures in T6-T8, another fracture in C2 and an eye orbital floor fracture. My tibia sustained a compound fracture not to mention the six broken ribs and I also had a serious concussion. Simply put, I was a wreck. But my bicycle helmet is what saved my life. Never ride a bike without a helmet!

As I lay crumpled in the road, a motorist came from the other direction. In turns out she was a trauma nurse at the University of Tennessee Medical Center (and actually later became one of my nurses in the hospital). She called 911 and made sure not to move me. She asked me a few questions to help gauge my injuries. Apparently, I was able to answer them even though I do not remember the event. I was not able to move my legs.

Fortunately for me, I was at a level one trauma center with all the resources necessary to go to work on Humpty Dumpty. I underwent two spinal surgeries, two leg surgeries, and maxillofacial repair over the course of the next few days remaining intubated the entire time. I was fused from T4 to T10 with titanium rods inserted to stabilize the spine. Plates and screws were used to put my leg back together. I was installed with a halo vest to support the neck fracture. That vest ultimately stayed on for five long months! The halo screws into the skull and bolts to a vest supported by four rods to prevent ANY movement of the head in any direction. My vision was restricted to what I could see straight ahead. I did not realize how difficult even eating would be with that halo. The head normally rocks forward and backward very slightly when swallowing. I could not do that. Would I ever be normal again?

I spent 11 days in the trauma center ICU and then another week in the orthopedic trauma unit. The biggest challenge initially was to manage the pain. It seemed like every touch or bump was sheer agony. Whoever invented Dilaudid is my best friend! Soon it was obvious that I was going to have no use of my legs and limited use of my core. Of course, I was in complete denial. I was sure I could just



wait it out and everything would be fine. As my spinal injury was incomplete, the neurosurgeon would not rule out recovery, but in retrospect, he also was not terribly optimistic.

REHABILITATION

After three weeks at the University of Tennessee Medical Center, I was transferred across the city to the Patricia Neal Rehabilitation Center at Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center for inpatient rehabilitation. I would spend the next 30 days there. Occupational therapists would assist me in dressing and grooming, teaching me new ways to do things I had been doing my whole life. Physical therapists would have me work on sitting and bending, reaching and lifting and stretching. It was all so overwhelming and, at times, completely depressing.

The real challenge came upon discharge. In the hospital all my needs were met by doctors, nurses, techs, and therapists. At home it would be me and my wife. Fortunately, our house has doorways wide enough for a wheelchair and the master bedroom is on the main floor. Nevertheless, there were and still are significant challenges.

Now, two years post injury, I better appreciate so many aspects of life. I have met people who have become good friend I would never have known were I still in my cycling world. I am very involved with fitness training. I work with a trainer three days a week to continue building upper body strength. Transfers are easy. If I can reach it, I can transfer to it. I am now part of a group at the gym. An able bodied group. They view me like any other person. I am not “John, the guy in the wheelchair.” I am just “John.” It is really quite amazing.

About six months ago I started driving. My church took up a donation from the members and bought me a 2010 Honda Odyssey with a built in floor ramp and hand controls. I was becoming more and more independent by the day. I now drive myself wherever I need to go and do whatever I need to do. Sure, I am limited, but I am free – free emotionally.

I have begun several sports activities including kayaking, rock climbing, adaptive water skiing, adaptive shooting sports, and hand-cycling. The last one is reminiscent of getting back on the horse that threw me.

Almost immediately upon returning home, I felt the call to give back. I became a peer mentor at Patricia Neal and also at UT Trauma Center for spinal cord patients. I have already met some wonderful patients and hope I have been an inspiration to all. When an able bodied person walks into a spinal cord patient’s room and says it is not the end of the world, the words are a little flat. I know. I have been there. But when I roll into a patient’s room in my wheelchair, tell my story, and offer a little good cheer, I have never failed to see the room brighten just a little. Life has more meaning than just selfish ambition and life’s walk involves far more than just walking.



John enjoying adaptive water skiing.

The Trauma Survivors Network

American Trauma Society
201 Park Washington
Falls Church, VA
admin@traumasurvivorsnetwork.org