

Chapter 4

Donald: Traumatic Brain Injury—Rancho Level II

Donald is a 26-year-old Caucasian male. He is a professional race car driver who suffered a TBI following a spectacular crash at one of his races. He was pulled out of his car unconscious and treated immediately at the track by EMTs who stabilized him enough for transport to the hospital. In the ER, he was given CT scans, x-rays, a tracheotomy, catheter, and IV, and an intracranial pressure monitor was inserted into his brain. He was comatose, and, in addition to his head injury, suffered two fractured ribs, a left fractured humerus and radial/ulnar wrist fracture, and a right fractured femur. He was sent to the intensive care unit (ICU). He had no other significant medical history.

Prior to his accident he functioned independently in all areas of self-care, work, and leisure. Due to his career, he was on the road for 7 months out of the year, traveling to different parts of the country to race. When he was not racing, he stayed at his parents' house in a rural community. Both his parents are living, and his father is still working as a police officer. His mother does not work, but is very involved in her church and helps the elderly congregants with shopping, chores, and visits. Donald has a younger sister, who is married with a 6-month-old child. She lives in a community near her parents. He has an older brother who is also married and lives 1,500 miles away with his wife and four children.

Donald was a friendly and outgoing person. He was very popular on the race car circuit and enjoys a "good time" out with the guys after the races. Donald always loved cars and began working on his father's car when he was 12. He bought his first race car when he was 17 with money he saved from odd jobs and fixing other people's cars on weekends. He played varsity football in high school. He opted to join the race car circuit immediately after high school graduation. He is a confident man and a good race car driver, with a good driving record and a few wins. He is well-respected by his peers on the circuit. Although he likes to drink, he has never driven while under the influence. He is a lady's man and has no desire to settle down in the near future. He loves to dance and his favorite musician is Garth Brooks. He tries to take in a concert whenever he is able. He has a dog, a mutt named Scoundrel, who travels with him in his small motor home.

Because he has no health insurance, his parents want him to stay with them during his recuperation. They say that they can take care of him and are sure the community will support them in their efforts as well. Already, the pastor of his mother's church has put out a request for help from parishioners for when he returns home.

Other team members include the neurologist, ICU nurses, physical therapist, respiratory therapist, and speech therapist. The acute care hospital where Donald was taken has a very good TBI team.

Occupational Therapy Evaluation

Donald was evaluated 1 week post-accident, when he was medically stable but still in the ICU. According to the medical record, Donald sustained a closed head injury with focal damage to the frontolateral cortex. He was comatose when the EMTs arrived at the scene of the accident, and he has not regained full consciousness yet. He is at the Rancho Los Amigos Level II at the time of the OT evaluation. The nurses have noted some spontaneous eye opening. His left upper extremity and right lower extremity are in casts due to fractures. His digits show 1+ pitting edema, and there are many bruises on his body. He demonstrates moderately increased tone in the right UE and left LE. Passive head movement elicits changes in tone and abnormal reflexes include the ATNR, STNR, TLR, and extensor thrust. He responds to stimuli such as loud noises, pinprick, and quick position changes with a generalized response, going into decerebrate rigidity with the stimulation. Facial grimacing and teeth grinding occur spontaneously. Nursing staff report that he appears more alert and responsive in the morning and again in the early evening. Donald has IVs in his right UE and an intracranial pressure monitor.