I AM SO CONFUSED:
THE CONCEPT OF POST TRAUMATIC CONFUSIONAL STATE IN DISORDERS OF CONSCIOUSNESS AFTER TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

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Common Definitions in Disorders of Consciousness in Brain Injury

Minimally Conscious State (MCS): condition of severely altered consciousness in which minimal but definite behavioural evidence of self or environmental awareness is demonstrated. Criteria for emergence from MCS:

1. Functional interactive communication.
2. Functional use of 2 different objects.

Post Traumatic Amnesia (PTA): represents a stage of recovery during which one’s orientation and memory for ongoing events remains poor.

Posttraumatic Confusional State (PTCS): “A confusional state can be defined as a transient organic mental syndrome with acute onset characterized by a global impairment of cognitive functions with a concurrent disturbance of consciousness, attentional abnormalities, reduced or increased psychomotor activity, and a disrupted sleep wake cycle.”

Typical pattern of recovery in TBI

Once responsiveness is established, early recovery usually includes: impaired attention, disorientation, emotional lability, disinhibition —verbal, physical, sexual, including agitation and aggression. Fluctuating symptoms, sleep disturbances, decreased daytime arousal and perceptual disturbances.

PTCS does not differ from delirium.

DSM-V criteria:

a. Disturbance in attention (i.e., reduced ability to direct, focus, sustain, and shift attention) and awareness (reduced orientation to the environment).

b. Develops over a short period of time (usually hours to a few days), acute change from baseline, fluctuate in severity.

c. Additional disturbance in cognition (e.g., memory deficit, disorientation, language, visuospatial ability, or perception).

d. Disturbances are not explained by a pre-existing, established or evolving neurocognitive disorder and do not occur in the context of a severely reduced level of arousal such as coma.

e. Evidence that the disturbance is a direct physiological consequence of another medical condition.

PTA may be an insufficient to describe post-TBI confusion.

• PTA is a proxy term for the complex multidimensional cognitive and neuro-behavioural deficits present in TBI recovery.

• Current PTA scales capture only orientation and memory; they do not distinguish pure amnestic syndromes; nor capture resolution or continuation of other symptoms.

Recognition of PTSC after TBI

• PTA may be a more meaningful and accurate term to encompass the broad range of cognitive and behavioural disturbances after TBI.

• All PTCS symptoms should be assessed and addressed.

References

4. Current PTA scales capture only orientation
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The 5th Biennial New Zealand Rehabilitation Conference 13-17 October 2015, Wellington.