



# Rural parents' experiences following their child's traumatic brain injury



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## Background

The voices of rural parents of children who have had a traumatic brain injury (TBI) are virtually unheard in the health literature. Furthermore, while models of service delivery are defined for children following TBI, none specifically address the unique needs of rural families.

## Method

This qualitative study used interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to explore the lived experience of rural parents whose school-aged children sustained a TBI. Two separate semi-structured interviews were conducted with four parents recruited via a rural Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program database. Transcripts were analysed according to IPA guidelines to gain detailed, in-depth data.

## Results

Four key themes emerged: 'I just want the reassurance', 'just go with it', 'cause they don't see', and 'the great divide'. These themes collectively reflect the key features of parent experience. The interplay between these features is complex and individual.

## Conclusions

There is support, both in the literature, and in the practice of BIRP clinicians for the use of models of service delivery which contain contextualised rehabilitation, family centred practice and the adoption of long term approaches for children and their families from both metropolitan and rural locations. The findings from this study show that whilst parents benefit from and value many aspects of these approaches there are specific considerations for their successful implementation with rural families. This impacts both metropolitan and rural health services as the key service providers for children following TBI in rural locations.

## Implications for Practice

The experience of rural parents could be improved if specialist brain injury services were provided to the child and family where they live; ongoing rehabilitation services are available; the decision for children to receive or not receive ongoing services is determined with families in the form of an individual plan; a model of information exchange with parents is developed; and the development of peer support programs that are accessible to rural families are prioritised.

*For the full report on this project visit our website, follow the link to the Rural Research Capacity Building Program and click on 'view completed projects'*

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