BRain and Auditory Nervous System in Closed HEad Injury Research Study

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The BRANCHES study
People who have sustained a head injury—concussion or traumatic brain injury (TBI)—often have difficulty understanding conversations in noisy environments or following complex directions even though they have no problems with their hearing. These difficulties occur because the central auditory system, an important part of the brain, may be affected by a head injury. In addition to processing sound, the central auditory system also helps the brain make sense of what people hear.

BRANCHES is a study to help us better understand changes in how the central auditory pathway encodes speech after a head injury. The study will also help us determine whether these changes are related to problems people experience after a head injury. We are looking for volunteers.

The BRANCHES study is supported by the National Institutes of Health/National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders.

Requirements for participating in the BRANCHES study
- People ages 18-60 who have experienced a mild to moderate closed head injury (including concussion) in the past 3-18 months or
- People ages 18-60 who have not experienced head injury.
- Speak English as a first language
- Have no pre-injury history of diagnosed learning disabilities or attention deficit disorder.
- Have no pre-injury history of mental illness, psychological disorders, or neurologic disorders.
- Have no more than a mild degree of hearing loss (will be evaluated as part of the study).
- Be able to participate in three visits, over 2-to-4 weeks, to the Auditory Electrophysiology Lab at Syracuse University. Free parking is provided. Each visit takes approximately 2-to-3 hours. Frequent breaks will be provided.

Compensation
- A free comprehensive hearing evaluation.
- Monetary compensation is provided following each visit at a rate of $10 per hour. In addition, participants receive a $25 bonus gift certificate upon completing the entire study.
- We will provide participants with a copy of their hearing test results. All results are strictly confidential and will not be shared with any medical providers or insurance.

Types of Tests
- Interview and case history
- Symptoms questionnaires
- Clinical assessment of hearing
- Auditory evoked potential testing: These tests record neural activity in your brain and auditory system using electrodes placed on the scalp with gel or a stretchy cap as you listen to speech sounds.
- Behavioral auditory processing tests: Tests of listening skills
- Behavioral neuropsychological tests: Tests that evaluate attention, memory and thinking skills.

Study Investigators
Kathy Vander Werff, Ph.D., Associate Professor and auditory researcher in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders in Syracuse University’s College of Arts and Sciences.

Brian Rieger, Ph.D., Chief Psychologist in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and director of the Concussion Management Program & CNY Sports Concussion Center at SUNY Upstate Medical University.