



**Who Are These Different Professionals?  
What Do They Do?**

**Who are the most common type of type of professionals I might see?**

Whether dealing with your own brain injury or that of a loved one, you may find yourself dealing with doctors and other professionals with whom you are not familiar. Generally speaking, a person with a brain injury will be best served by getting evaluated and treated by a professional who has specialized knowledge of and experience treating brain injury.

**Doctors:**

**Physiatrist or Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) Specialist** – These medical doctors (M.D. or D.O), are trained to treat disorders or disability of the muscles, bones, and nervous system. The physiatrist helps the person with brain injury to make the most of their cognitive, behavioral, and physical function.

**Neurologist** - A neurologist is a medical doctor with specialized training in diagnosing, treating, and managing disorders of the brain and nervous system. Individual neurologists may focus on particular diseases or injury. These can include traumatic brain injury, concussion (mild brain injury), seizures/epilepsy, headaches, pain or diseases such as Parkinson’s, Multiple Sclerosis, and others. Neurologists may evaluate through neurologic tests for mental status, vision, strength, coordination, reflexes, and sensation. (These can include but are not limited to, CT Scans, MRIs, EEGs, and Sleep Studies.)

**Psychiatrist** - A psychiatrist is a medical doctor (an M.D. or D.O.) who specializes in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental, emotional and behavioral disorders. Because they are medical doctors, they can order diagnostic tests and prescribe medications. Some problems that a

neuropsychiatrist can address include anger management, depression, uninhibited sexual behavior, and delusions.

**Neuro-optometrist / Behavioral Optometrist** - A doctor of optometry (O.D.) who specializes in treatment of patients with visual defects resulting from brain injury and other neurological insults. Neuro-optometric therapy is a process for the rehabilitation of visual/perceptual/ motor dysfunctions including (but not limited to) double vision; visual orientation/movement problems; motion sickness; vision perception problems; and visual processing impairments.



The individual who sustains a brain injury and his or her family member are the most important members of the treatment team!

#### **Mental Health Professionals:**

**Neuropsychologist** - A psychologist (Ph.D. or PsyD.) who specializes in understanding how the brain and its abilities are affected by neurological injury or illness. These psychologists have undergone extended training. They provide evaluation through a combination of interviews and written or computerized tests to determine how much the injury has affected cognitive abilities (i.e., thinking skills), behavior, and emotions.

**Counselor** – Different types of professionals can provide counseling including Licensed Clinical Psychologists (Ph.D. or PsyD.), Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW), and Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC). Counseling helps people with brain injury and/ or family members who are experiencing difficulty adjusting to life after the injury.



## **Therapists:**

**Occupational Therapists (OT)** address activities of daily living (referred to as ADLs) such as feeding, swallowing, grooming, bathing, dressing, and using the bathroom. OTs work on cognitive (thinking) skills for basic housework and money management, as well as social skills for community re-entry. OTs can address vision, sensation, driving skills, and fine motor skills (movement of small body muscles, such as in the hands).

**Physical Therapists (PT)** evaluate and treat a person's ability to move their body. The PT focuses on improving physical function by addressing muscle strength, flexibility, endurance, balance, and coordination. Functional goals include increasing independent ability with sitting, walking, getting in and out of bed, going up and downstairs, and getting up off the floor.

**Speech/Language Pathologists (SLP)** evaluate an individual's ability to comprehend what is seen or heard, as well as express oneself through speech, writing, or other forms of communication. SLPs may address cognitive (thinking) issues and ways to compensate for difficulties. In situations where the individual is unable to speak, SLPs will train them to use assistive technology as an alternative form of communication.

To locate a professional in your area you can visit [www.biav.net](http://www.biav.net) and search "Find a Community Resource."

## **Where can I get help?**

**Brain Injury Association of Virginia** 1.800.444.6443 - Connect to information and resources via telephone or Chat [www.biav.net](http://www.biav.net)



1506 Willow Lawn Drive, Suite 212 Richmond, VA 23230 [www.biav.net](http://www.biav.net) 800-444-6443

This project is supported [in part] through state general funds (Contract #16-002A) administered by the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS).