



brain injury AUSTRALIA

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Deadly yet Discounted: Brain Injury from Falls BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS WEEK BEGINS TODAY MONDAY AUGUST 16

Falls – not motor vehicle accidents, not assaults – are now the leading cause of traumatic brain injury (TBI) in Australia, accounting for more than 2 in every 5 hospital admissions. It's due to the ageing of our population. Every year, thousands of older Australians suffer a TBI from a fall. Many will die. Some will survive but with profound and permanent disability. And because it is their brain that is injured they will be affected not only physically but also in the way they think, feel and behave.

Yet head injuries in older people are often overlooked. Amanda's story is sadly typical. Her 76 year-old mother fell from her nursing home bed in the middle of the night. "The staff told me not to worry," Amanda recalls, "but when I got there she had cuts on her face and a really badly bruised eye and nose." Amanda insisted an ambulance be called and **when x-rays were taken at the hospital – more than 15 hours after her fall – they revealed two hip fractures and bleeding in her brain.** "During the two weeks in hospital her condition just deteriorated. Nothing positive seemed to be done for her." **Amanda's mother died 3 days after her return to the nursing home.**

"Not a day goes by that I don't miss her or think of her," says Amanda. "I just believe that if Mum was a younger person they would have done more for her. They just gave up. **Everybody deserves the same treatment no matter if they are 17 or 76. My Mum's life was cruelly taken from her through brain injury.**"

"Australia is heading for a 'perfect storm'", says Nick Rushworth, the Executive Officer of Brain Injury Australia. "People are living longer. They're being urged to be more active into older ages. This places them at greater risk of a TBI from a fall. And improvements in trauma care mean they are more likely to survive but with a greater level of disability." **By 2050 the total healthcare costs due to falls in older Australians are expected to almost triple - to \$1.3 billion per year – requiring an additional 900,000 hospital bed days and over 3,000 extra nursing home places.**

Yet TBI, like other injuries from falls, is preventable. Moderate exercise to improve strength and balance, regular reviews of medication and eye checks, improving lighting and reducing hazards around the home have all been demonstrated to reduce the incidence of falls.

For more information, to arrange interviews with Amanda and Nick, contact Nick Rushworth Executive Officer, Brain Injury Australia (0417) 373 622