

Disorders of Consciousness Program – *Fact Sheet*

What is a Disorder of Consciousness (DoC)?

Consciousness is defined as wakefulness, or alertness, with awareness of one's self and the environment. Severe brain injuries can often result in a disorder of consciousness (DoC), causing reduced arousal and abnormal and/or limited reactions to stimulation from the environment. Because individuals with a disorder of consciousness have different needs than patients undergoing traditional rehabilitation, they benefit from specialized, individualized programs designed to meet their unique needs.

Shepherd Center's DoC Program

Shepherd Center's DoC Program, which began in 2000, is one of only a few dedicated programs nationwide providing specialized services and an interdisciplinary approach to care for people in low-level states of consciousness caused by brain injury. Goals of this four- to six-week program include:

- Medical stabilization
- Management of health needs (e.g., nutrition)
- Facilitation of optimal positioning/seating/mobility
- Identification of environmental modifications to facilitate arousal, communication and cognitive recovery
- Family/caregiver support and education

The Interdisciplinary Team

Upon admission to Shepherd Center, each patient is assigned to a rehabilitation team, which offers consistency of care throughout their inpatient hospital stay. Each team is composed of the following:

- Physician
- Case Manager
- Nurses and Personal Care Technicians
- Dietician
- Physical Therapist
- Psychologist
- Occupational Therapist
- Exercise Physiologist
- Speech-Language Pathologist
- Family Counselor
- Respiratory Therapist
- Chaplain

Assessment

Given the nature of severe brain injury, every patient with a disorder of consciousness is different. Therefore, comprehensive assessments of medical status, mobility, tone, arousal, communication and cognitive functioning are completed upon admission to develop individualized plans of care. Throughout a patient's inpatient stay, Shepherd Center's specially trained staff administer the Coma Recovery Scale-Revised (CRS-R) on a weekly basis to track improvements with arousal, responsiveness to environmental stimulation and communication, which ultimately determines emergence into a fully conscious state.



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Patient Treatment

The DoC Program's dedicated interdisciplinary team works closely to facilitate the patient's recovery by offering an individualized plan of care that balances medication management, behavioral therapy, technology, environmental stimulation and rest. In addition, care plans may include:

- Casting/splinting for tone management
- Wheelchair seating clinic
- Functional electrical stimulation (FES) cycles
- Augmentative/alternative communication (AAC)
- Animal-assisted therapy

Family-Centered Care

Shepherd Center understands that brain injury is a family injury, so we offer emotional and psychological support to patient families through family support groups and individual counseling. During your stay, the program will provide opportunities for education, support and training to help families feel comfortable with caring for their loved one at any level of function. Support, education and training opportunities include:

- New family orientation
- Brain injury lectures
- Family support groups
- Peer support meetings
- Monthly family events/offerings
- Outings in the community
- Dependent passenger evaluation
- Hands-on training with all disciplines

Discharge Planning and Support

At the end of the patient's stay, the case manager, along with other members of the treatment team, will help you determine the best options moving forward. These may include:

- Progressing to a rehabilitation level of care.
- Discharging home with supportive services. You will be assigned a Transition Support Coordinator, who will be available to you for 60 days after discharge to answer questions and provide support.
- Discharging to a facility that will care for the patient.

Learn more about Shepherd Center's Disorders of Consciousness program at shepherd.org/DOC

Submit a patient referral inquiry at shepherd.org/refer-a-patient



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