

CASE STUDY OF BRIANA DOLORA

Briana was a 22-year-old 5 ft. 3 in. Spanish beauty in the 4th year of her Kinesiology degree at Western University when in January of last year her whole world turned upside down. She was raised in Toronto as the eldest of four children. Her parents were refugees from Columbia who have adapted into life in Canada well and both have well-paying jobs. Four years ago her parents' marriage ended in divorce and their Latin temperament has caused constant battling for the attention of the children by one parent over the other. Briana had enough and chose to come to London to get away from the tensions to study Kinesiology at Western. She has been living in a rented house with 5 other students including her boyfriend James. Their house is a 2 km. walk to the university and she enjoys this exercise each day. Her parents help her subsidize the savings she has accumulated with part-time jobs to cover her \$1000 a month costs.

She and her partner James were in a single truck collision that caused his death and her to be transported to the trauma unit at LHSC VH due to her injuries. It all started on a beautiful winter day after a big overnight snowfall. James suggested that she come with him for company as he worked for a snow plowing company. She jumped at the chance. It would give her some relaxation time before embarking on intense studying for her upcoming next set of mid-term exams. The day was progressing perfectly and as they were laughing about a funny incident they both experienced last week the truck hit some black ice and James lost control they zigzagged across the road and ended up hitting a tree full force. James didn't bother to put his seatbelt on and he was thrown through the front windshield and Briana although wearing her seatbelt the impact of the collision on her side of the truck caused the tree to sever the seat from the truck and she was thrown out of the truck in the seat hitting a fence in a yard, 10 meters from the tree. She lost consciousness and only woke up one hour later and found herself in the ER with many people around her shouting orders. Her face hurt and she was having trouble breathing.

Someone asked her to tell them her name and what day it was? Briana had trouble responding, she was having trouble connecting her thoughts. She at first wasn't sure where she was and why. She then realized she was in a hospital and slowly she remembered the accident. The people informed her they needed to do something with her side. Then she felt pain and a lot of pressure on her side that was already sore. Finally she realized she was able to breathe easier and was relieved. Then suddenly she remembered about James. Just as she was to ask someone starting putting a tube down her throat. She tried to fight them but someone gave her a shot and she quickly went back to sleep. When she woke up again she was in another area and there were machines and people all around. Her nurse, Susan, at least that is who she called herself, starting talking to Briana asking her for her name and what day it was? Briana wasn't really sure because she knew she started out on a Saturday in the morning with James but it seemed as if so much time had passed and where was James? Was he all right?

There was also a respiratory therapist at least that is what Bill called himself. He seemed to be working on the machine that was forcing her to breathe regularly. She still had this cumbersome tube in her throat that prevented her from talking. Later in the day some doctors came around and checked on her. They then told her that they would trial her off the ventilator later in the day. Susan, her nurse, also told her that her parents come from Toronto to see her and were waiting outside. They had been with her for several hours during the night. But Briana couldn't remember even seeing them, up to now. Her continuing worry was James but she could neither ask nor was anyone telling her anything. Hopefully when this tube comes out she can ask. Susan also told her all her room-mates had come to see her and she wondered if Briana was up to a short visit with them as they were very anxious about her? Briana welcomed seeing her friends so she shook her head affirmatively. Her friends came in first with some blown up get well foil balloons for her. They showed their concern and assured her they would be there for her as soon as she came back to the house they all rented near the campus. They didn't stay long and also didn't say anything about James. This really started troubling her. Where

was he? She tried to motion to Susan her need to write a message down. But Susan seemed to ignore her. Then her parents came in. both very worried. The fact they were together was surprising since their divorce they were usually barely civil to each other. This was the reason Briana had chosen to come to London for university to get away from all the friction. But they actually seemed to be mutually concerned about her and talking reasonably with each other. They too did not bring up anything about James. Now Susan was beginning to really worry. Is James ok and then a very worrying thought appeared, could he have died in the crash?

Finally Susan and Bill worked together and pulled out the tube in Briana's throat and although it was sore she realized she could finally communicate with them. Her first question was, How is James? They both showed the slightest hint of alarm and said the doctor would explain later. In time Briana learned that James had died in the crash and this left a huge hole in Briana. She also learned that she had surgery during the night to repair fractures in her forehead and seal the area in her lung that had caused the collapse. Briana also started to feel pain in body, well it seemed all over her body. She was assured this was normal considering the injuries she had sustained.

After another week Briana was sent home to recuperate. But since that time she had sustained unremitting low back and neck pain as a result of the accident. This pain has really interfered with her previous carefree life. That life included a lot of drinking of rye on the weekends. She has tried all the over the counter medications suggested by doctors and pharmacists without relief. This pain has really challenged her in her studies. She finds it so hard to be able to focus on studying and is worrying that she might fail out of her program. If she can't continue she will be forced to go back to Toronto and all the animosities that continue to occur between her parents and siblings. But she will be unable to pay her share of the rent if she doesn't obtain more scholarships or student loans. She has also notices that her friends have not gotten over James death and seem to distance themselves from her. This is learning her in an increasingly smaller social group. She feels lost and worries that she is becoming depressed. She is having trouble sleeping because of the pain

and this then interferes further with her ability to focus on her university studies. Although her professors are willing to make accommodations for her she is not sure within pain relief event this can help.

At the same time she really wants to complete her degree and move on into graduate studies to become a physio therapist. She feels that her experience with the accident can make her into an excellent PT. but she won't get into this program without high academic marks.

She now is wondering what her future holds for her – a life of pain or a future? She has come to the interprofessional team for help.