



## Independently minded

**FOR A PERSON WHO HAS EXPERIENCED** major brain injuries, performing normal daily activities can be like trying to get around London during construction season, says Gary Davies. “You can’t travel your normal route, so you need to find a new way to get there.”

Davies is a social worker with Brainworks, a private company that offers rehabilitation services, mainly to individuals who have been injured in motor vehicle accidents. The company is owned by Arden McGregor, a psychological clinician, and her husband Russell Temple, and its focus is on functional rehabilitation.

Eighty-five percent of Brainworks’ clients are people who have been involved in motor vehicle accidents. Living with the effects of catastrophic brain injury or chronic pain from soft tissue injuries, they need to learn strategies to manage their lives and to cope with their new limitations. “There are behavioural and functional skills that can be learned,” says McGregor. “Our goal is to help our clients become independent.”

Normally, an insurance company assigns a case manager to assess an injured client and oversee their treatment. The case manager assembles a treatment team to deal with specific needs—a speech pathologist, psychologist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist or other professional practitioner—and a rehabilitation therapist to carry out parts of the treatment program.

Brainworks can provide psychological, vocational and social work

services, but it is in their integrated approach to rehabilitation therapy that they have carved out their own unique niche.

“Our rehab therapists are generalists who take clinical direction from the regulated health professionals,” says McGregor. “They implement what is prescribed in an integrated way. They cue for appropriate behaviours in real-life, hands-on situations.” McGregor believes the approach is one of the keys to Brainworks’ success. “Our model is client-focused and community-based. We don’t ask clients to come here for treatment, we go out to where they live and work.”

While McGregor refers to the injured individual as her client, she also answers to the case manager and submits detailed documentation to the insurance company. “There are always competing forces that need to be balanced—insurance companies who pay the bills, lawyers and family members who act as advocates and, ultimately, the client. We have to know the system and what clients are entitled to, and we make sure we keep on top of any changing legislation.”

For motor vehicle injuries, treatment rates are set by the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. “Rehabilitation therapists range from \$55 to \$155 per hour, depending on the nature of the work being done and the credentials of the person doing it,” says McGregor. Brainworks uses the same rate scale for private clients, most of

whom are covered by extended health care benefits. A number of clients, after completing their initial treatment plan and receiving their final insurance settlement, decide to continue treatment and pay for it themselves.

In 2005, Brainworks worked with 85 clients. “The program is very intensive, especially in the beginning,” says McGregor. “Some we may only see for one hour a week, but most are several hours and we can spend up to 30 hours per week on one client.”

McGregor worked in psychology and rehabilitation therapy for 12 years before starting Brainworks in August of 2003. Within four months she had hired four employees, and now, less than three years later, she and Temple have 17 employees, most in the London area but also in Sarnia, Windsor, Strathroy, Wingham and Kitchener.

Up to this point, Brainworks hasn’t done any active marketing. “Our business has grown by word of mouth. Referrals come because we have done good work, and because of our strong behavioural focus.”

McGregor says managing the rapid growth has been a challenge at times—staff has to be paid before Brainworks receives payment for their services, and that has led to cash-flow issues. “This business has long receivables. It took two years before we were in a comfort zone with our cash flow.”

As for future plans, McGregor says the business will continue to expand. “In particular I see a need up north. We have developed some really good therapy materials, and we may look at marketing them to provide training and services to a larger geographical area, with the main emphasis on rehabilitation therapy.”

The couple has also been approached by Toronto and U.S. companies looking to enter some kind of partnership arrangement, but McGregor says they want the business to remain fully independent. ■ *Kym Wolfe*

	<b>BRAINWORKS</b>
<b>BUSINESS</b>	Rehabilitation services
<b>ESTABLISHED</b>	2003
<b>EMPLOYEES</b>	19
<b>MARKETS</b>	Southwestern Ontario <a href="http://www.brainworksrehab.com">www.brainworksrehab.com</a>