



## 15. Head Injuries

*In 1848, Phineas Gage was working for the Rutland & Burlington Railroad. While at work, an explosion hurled a 3 foot, 7 inch long – and over one and a quarter inch in diameter – crowbar at him. The bar entered his left cheek and exited through the top of his head, flying another 25 yards before stopping! To everyone's surprise, including Phineas, he was not dead.*

*Some reports said he didn't even lose consciousness. He was operated on, recovered, and even returned to work, but his co-workers were not happy with him. Apparently his injury caused a personality change that made him very grumpy, miserable and profane. He was let go and ended up doing some odd jobs, which included appearing in Barnum's museum in New York.*

This is a rare case because most people who sustain an automatic lobotomy like Phineas are dead before they hit the ground. But in some cases, less serious head injuries can be fatal.

The following example demonstrates how dangerously subtle serious head injuries can be.

### He Didn't Seem to be Hurt...

*Our ambulance was called at 6:30 am on a Monday morning because a woman couldn't wake her son to go to work. When we arrived, he was unconscious on his bed. The history was sketchy, but we did rule out a diabetic reaction or narcotics overdose. While we questioned his mom about some bruises and scratches on his face, she told us he had been in a fight 8 days earlier, wasn't seriously injured, and did not seek medical aid.*

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*He was now in very serious condition and not responding to anything. Further questioning revealed that a few days after the fight, his personality started to change as he became short-tempered and very irritable. The mother told us that the night before, he had been lying on the couch, appeared very sleepy and slept for most of the evening. He went to bed at her suggestion and was found unconscious the next morning. The mother then called paramedics.*

*We rushed him to the hospital where he died several hours later.*

These are two different examples of what head injuries can do. In the next article, we'll go over the signs and symptoms of head injuries.

 ... AT ALL TIMES!