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Acquired Brain Injury Ireland's Barbara O'Connell Wins Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award

Last October Ireland's *Women Mean Business (WMB™)*, a magazine about promoting female entrepreneurs and businesswomen, presented its sixth annual awards for Female Entrepreneur of the Year, Social Entrepreneur of the Year, Woman in Technology of the Year, and Businesswoman of the Year. Barbara O'Connell, co-founder and CEO of Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, was the recipient of the 2012 Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Social Entrepreneur award recipients are described as women who are selfless in their approach to work and life, who seek to generate social value rather than profits, and whose work is targeted at long-term change—change for the better. “We were proud to nominate our CEO for the WMB award and not in the least surprised that she won the title of WMB Social Entrepreneur—it is richly deserved,” commented one of the Acquired Brain Injury Ireland employees who nominated Barbara.

Personifying the theme of this year's WMB awards—Power the Passion—Barbara's passion to make a difference in the lives of people with acquired brain injury was inspired by her brother Peter Bradley. Peter sustained a severe head injury in 1980. Years and multiple health events later, he was no longer able to live independently. Although all Peter needed was supervision, the only option available was moving to a nursing home. Peter and his family's experience with the lack of information and resources available to people with acquired brain injury became the impetus to establish The Peter Bradley Foundation. Founded in 2000 and subsequently renamed Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland provides a “range of pioneering, flexible, and tailor-made services for people

with acquired brain injury” throughout Ireland.

Not surprisingly, winning the Social Entrepreneur award has opened doors and brought recognition for both Barbara as a businesswoman and Acquired Brain Injury Ireland as a unique provider of specialty services for people with acquired brain injury. “It’s almost as if you don’t have to prove yourself anymore—it’s a given you know what you are doing,” she comments. In a nod to the kind of businesswoman Barbara has become, she has been invited to be a mentor for nonprofit startup organizations. Previously a recipient of similar mentoring, Barbara remarks, “These kinds of things give you life. I had help in my journey and now I can pass it on.” As for opening doors, part of the award Barbara has been given is a national radio advertising campaign, which she will use to further Acquired Brain Injury Ireland’s education campaigns, including the Mind Your Head helmet campaign and Concussion in Sports campaign.

Barbara likens her Social Entrepreneur award to accreditation and having external validation of the skills and passion of her staff to fulfill Acquired Brain Injury Ireland’s mission, which is “to enable people with neurorehabilitation needs to lead meaningful lives in the community by providing personalized quality rehabilitation and support.” Accredited for brain injury programs since 2006, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland was recognized in its most recent survey for several noteworthy practices:

- “Acquired Brain Injury Ireland has implemented a comprehensive process of obtaining input from the persons served that goes beyond the usual feedback measurement of consumer satisfaction. A unique and exemplary approach in this respect includes the organization’s use of uSPEQ® as the satisfaction measurement tool. It has customized a few feedback inquiries so that the feedback provided by the persons served and families addresses the organization’s stated and published principles and values, thus allowing the organization to continually assess its efforts and commitment to its guiding principles. This allows for the organization at all levels to ensure that it does what it says it will do. This is a rare practice that goes beyond just printing and posting the organizational values and principles to actually asking the persons served if the organization demonstrates its values.”
- “Acquired Brain Injury Ireland goes beyond being a service provider as it has taken it upon itself to be the country’s leading advocacy agent to ensure that all citizens of Ireland are aware of the needs of persons who are recovering from acquired brain injuries by promoting changes in public health policy and systems and developing a robust education and awareness campaign that is exemplary.”
- “Acquired Brain Injury Ireland not only has continued supporting specialized training for its staff members with the Certified Brain Injury Specialist training, but also it has taken a leadership role in creating the Certified Brain Injury Specialist training specifically for Ireland that addresses the uniqueness of the Irish healthcare system.”
- “The organization has also developed the Relationships and Sexuality (RAS) training guidelines for staff, which is comprehensive and well researched. It provides staff with the training to develop tools to discuss relationships and sexuality issues with the persons served.”

Evident that Barbara’s colleagues at Acquired Brain Injury Ireland share her dedication to generating long-term change for the better, one of the employees had this to say: “Over the

past twelve years, there has not been one single day that Barbara O'Connell's passion has not made a difference to someone with an acquired brain injury in Ireland. While winning the WMB award is a special milestone on the road of developing services, Barbara's ability to 'power the passion' has ensured that many more achievements lie ahead for her; Acquired Brain Injury Ireland; and, most of all, for people affected by neurological conditions."

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Speaking of uSPEQ (pronounced *you speak*)

Perhaps your curiosity about uSPEQ has been sparked. Read on for an overview of the tool and some of its key elements and advantages.

uSPEQ overview

Its name derived from the acronym for Universal Stakeholder Participation and Experience Questionnaires, uSPEQ is a turnkey, pooled data collection and reporting system designed to gather information from key stakeholders. It features questionnaires with a core set of universal items for benchmark comparisons, an optional set of standardized items, and the ability to incorporate custom items to fit the unique data needs of an organization. uSPEQ captures the survey results in a comprehensive report, allowing an organization to hear what is important to its stakeholders and use that information in its quality and performance improvement efforts. Used by organizations both with and without CARF-accredited programs, over 70,000 consumers have participated in the uSPEQ Consumer Experience Survey over the past three years. The latest uSPEQ Employee Climate Survey Benchmark Report includes feedback from 18,000 employees.

uSPEQ products

The [uSPEQ Consumer Experience Survey](#) gathers feedback from consumers (persons served, customers, clients, patients, residents, etc.) regarding their satisfaction and perception of the quality of services.

The [uSPEQ Employee Climate Survey](#) assesses organizational climate from the employees' perspective.

uSPEQ advantages

- Helps identify areas for organizational quality and performance improvement. uSPEQ covers domains and concerns important to a wide range of stakeholders, and there is sufficient detail in the questionnaire items and reports to enable an organization to use uSPEQ information to identify opportunities for quality improvement and track performance against goals.
- Provides evidence to support marketing efforts. uSPEQ reports highlight organizational strengths to assist organizational promotion.
- Applies to many types of populations and organizations. uSPEQ questionnaires were developed with broad input from providers, consumers, family members, advocates, payers, policymakers, and researchers. The domains and items on the uSPEQ

questionnaires are meaningful and applicable across many types of organizations.

- Offers psychometrically sound survey tools. uSPEQ questionnaires were pilot tested by diverse organizations, varying in size, type, and geographical location. The questionnaires were refined with Classical Test Theory (CTT), including construct validity, measures of internal consistency, item correlations, and predictive (criterion) validity; Item Response Theory (IRT); and qualitative analysis.
- Allows for comparisons across core items. Survey items, scales, and data collection methods are standardized to allow for meaningful comparisons and trending for quality improvement. A common set of universal items are included in all surveys. Characteristics of an organization and respondents are also collected from all organizations to allow for additional comparisons and benchmarking.
- Allows for customization.
 - Choose your items. Each uSPEQ questionnaire contains a set of universal items that applies to all settings, programs, and organizations. As desired, organizations can add optional items that were also scientifically tested and are typically applicable to certain service settings or populations. Additional custom items designed by an organization can also be added to the questionnaire.
 - Choose your terminology. uSPEQ customizes questionnaires to reflect terminology relevant to the organization using it.
 - Choose the timing, frequency, and method of survey administration. In accordance with the preference of an organization, questionnaires can be distributed online, on paper, or both.
- Provides comprehensive, timely reports. The standard uSPEQ report format includes organizational strengths, opportunities for improvement, item summaries, comparisons over time, overview of respondent characteristics, and respondent comments.

uSPEQ advantages for organizations with CARF-accredited programs

- uSPEQ was originally developed to provide a tool and benchmarking to help human service providers meet CARF standards for information management and performance improvement. Although CARF accreditation is not a requirement for using uSPEQ and organizations with CARF-accredited programs are not required to use uSPEQ:
 - uSPEQ helps organizations meet the CARF standards related to gathering feedback from persons served.
 - uSPEQ helps organizations meet the CARF standards related to gathering feedback from personnel.
 - uSPEQ can be administered across components of a service continuum.
 - uSPEQ's domains span the concerns of stakeholders.

So, you might be wondering, how does this really work in an organization? As noted in the first story, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland has implemented the uSPEQ Customer Experience Survey, including optional and customized items that relate to its principles and values. For example, one of Acquired Brain Injury Ireland's values is "Choices—respecting the right to manage and control our lives within our capabilities." To that point, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland asks consumers to rate their level of agreement with statements such as "I am able to make choices that are important to me," "I participate in activities I want when I want," and "I participated in choosing whom I live with." Says Barbara O'Connell, co-founder and CEO of Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, "we use uSPEQ to tell us how we are measuring up to our values. If you are really person centered, you have to listen." Everyone benefits when an organization hears the voices of its stakeholders. For further information please visit www.uspeq.org, email info@uspeq.org, or call (888) 877-3788.

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Hot Off the Press

Are you the new CARFette at your organization? Is your organization's accreditation due to expire in the next year? Could you use a CARF tune-up? Do you find yourself explaining accreditation to other people at your organization or external stakeholders? If you answered yes to any of these questions, here are some resources to help you. In anticipation of the 2013 standards manual year—July 1, 2013, through June 30, 2014—all of CARF's 2013 publications are now available. Visit the Online Store at www.carf.org/catalog for detailed information on:

- Medical rehabilitation publications such as the standards manual, Survey Preparation Workbook, and Survey Preparation Package, each available in hard copy and on CD.
- General interest publications such as the Accreditation Sourcebook, consumer cards, brochure "How to choose services for you and your loved ones," and the Siebens Health Care Notebook.
- Promotional items for your staff and other stakeholders.

If you are interested in attending an educational event to learn about the CARF standards and other topics relevant to accreditation, please visit www.carf.org/Events for information on:

- CARF 101: Preparing for Successful Accreditation. Held regionally, CARF 101s are comprehensive two-day training sessions designed to help organizations prepare for successful accreditation. Topics include an overview of the accreditation process; the value of accreditation for organizations, consumers, and the public; CARF standards, including the ASPIRE to Excellence® quality framework, Rehabilitation Process for the Persons Served, and specific program standards; and examples of conformance to the CARF standards, including discussion of the most frequently missed standards.
- Transforming Outcomes, a three-day interactive training institute that will take you through the steps required to plan and conduct a program of outcomes management and quality improvement, including outcomes system design and data collection; data analysis, interpretation, and management reporting; and identification of areas for quality improvement activities based on findings.

Finally, three new recordings called “The CARF Accreditation Experience” are now available at www.carf.org/Resources/Multimedia. The three recordings are:

- [CARF Accreditation Overview](#)
Why choose CARF? Discover the accreditation benefits for service providers, persons served, payers, and others. (Flash, 13½ min.)
- [CARF Standards Overview](#)
Learn what the CARF standards mean and how the manuals are organized. (Flash, 12½ min.)
- [Accreditation Process Overview](#)
Journey through the steps to CARF accreditation from the application through postsurvey follow-up. (Flash, 9 min.)

These are only a few of the resources and opportunities available for you to engage with and learn more about CARF and the accreditation process. As always, feel free to contact the CARF resource specialist assigned to your organization: Mary Jo Fitzgerald, mfitzgerald@carf.org, ext. 7148; Carol Imler, cimler@carf.org, ext. 7102; Karen Kloter, kkloter@carf.org, ext. 7190; or Cathy Rebella, crebella@carf.org, ext. 7132.

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If you have suggestions for content to be included in a future issue of *Medical Rehab Connection*, please email the editor, Cindy Solochek at csolochek@carf.org. Please include the carf.org domain on your safe-senders list to ensure *Medical Rehab Connection* and other important emails from CARF are not blocked by spam filters.

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