

Current concussion guidelines do not guarantee player safety

HENRY FORD

Concussion guidelines used by many sports teams including colleges and high schools "to determine when a player can return to play have not been supported by research and do not adequately protect players."

This controversial opinion is outlined in a "Contempo" article that appears in the Dec. 21 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA). It is authored by Michael Collins, Ph.D., and Mark Lovell, Ph.D., of the Division of Neuropsychology at Henry Ford Health System in Detroit, and Doug McKee, M.D., a sports-medicine physician and chairman of the Department of Family Medicine at Indiana University School of Medicine.

Many teams currently follow concussion guidelines promoted by sports-medicine experts or by the American Academy of Neurology. The guidelines

are designed to help the coach, athletic trainer or team physician assign a grade to the concussion based on symptoms and then follow a corresponding protocol as to how long the player should refrain from play.

For example, the Contempo describes a hockey player who receives an elbow to the face. Initially, he experiences confusion without loss of consciousness and passes a brief mental status evaluation. After 30 minutes he reports nausea and dizziness. He also performs poorly on the memory component of a mental status evaluation.

According to American Academy of Neurology guidelines, this athlete experienced a grade 1 concussion and would have been allowed to return to the game within 15 to 20 minutes. The authors contend this situation may place the athlete at risk because the effects of his concussion were not initially apparent.

"Currently, no research exists to support the specific grades of concussion

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and related return-to-play recommendations," Collins said. "Concussions affect every player differently. Uniform guidelines do not take into account varying

symptoms and differing vulnerabilities to neurological injury for players of different ages."

Collins continued: "Part of the challenge is that, historically, concussion has been difficult to measure. MRI and CT scans are not typically sensitive enough to measure the effects of concussion. Also, a concussion does not always involve loss of consciousness and sometimes the symptoms take minutes or hours to manifest."

In a related article published this month in the Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine, Lovell, Collins and McKee demonstrated that brief loss of consciousness is not an indicator of how someone will recover following concussion. This finding questions the makeup of all existing guidelines because they base severity of injury on loss of consciousness. Collins and Lovell are continuing to study the importance of other symptoms of concussion including confusion and memory loss.

To develop scientific return-to-play guidelines, Collins and Lovell currently are conducting a study of high school, college and professional athletes. They administer a 30-minute battery of written and verbal neuropsychological tests to athletes to establish pre-season baseline readings. If a player later experiences a concussion during the season, he is retested and does not return to play until he has returned to his baseline level of function. Thus, each return-to-play decision is based on individual factors.

The battery of neuropsychological tests was developed by Lovell for the Pittsburgh Steelers. A similar program to help guide return-to-play decisions is now being used by the National Football League and the National Hockey League under Lovell's direction.

Collins led a study published in the Sept. 8 issue of JAMA that was the first of its kind to determine long-term effects of concussions on athletes' neuropsychological activity.

Tenth annual Turning Points conference coming up

The tenth annual Turning Points Conference, presented by Oakwood Healthcare System, will focus on the affects humor and a positive attitude can have on your life and health. "Feeling Movement: A new attitude for the new millennium," will take place from 8 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 29 at the Dearborn Inn.

This year's Turning Points Conference will feature keynote speaker, Liz Curig Higgs, an Encourager®, who will address the audience using humor and inspiring stories that emphasize

the power that humor and positive living can have on life.

Higgs has been designated a Certified Speaking Professional by the National Speakers Association and is one of only two dozen women in the world to be named to the Speaker Hall of Fame.

Attendees will be able to participate in two of the following workshops:

■ "When Your Hurt All Over Pain of Connective Tissue Disorders"

There are many different forms of connective tissue dis-

ease - the inflammation of cartilage, muscle or bone tissue caused by the body's immune system attacking its own healthy tissue. These diseases include rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia and lupus. Felix Madrid, M.D., will address the various symptoms, treatments and options for managing the challenges of living with a connective tissue disorder.

■ "Secrets, Myths and Old Wives' Tales associated with Diabetes"

Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in the United

States. Training in self-management is of utmost importance in the treatment of this disease. Stress management, diet and exercise have proven to reduce the effects of diabetes. Linda Aman and Sharon Wilson, certified diabetes educators, will help participants assess their risk of getting diabetes and will discuss methods for controlling and living with diabetes.

■ "Cardiology & Women: A Natural Change of Heart"

As women consider ways to stay healthy through the aging process, one of the priorities

should definitely include a healthy heart. Heart disease kills twice as many women as all cancers (including breast cancer) combined. The good news is the heart often responds to lifestyle changes. In this workshop, Arthur Riba, M.D. will discuss some of the ways women can prevent and reduce the risk of heart disease. Riba will also outline the symptoms and the latest research evolving around heart disease.

■ "Vitamins, Hormones & Longevity"

Dr. Rebecca Harris will

explore the different avenues of women's health and provide a better understanding of a woman's body. Harris' mission is to ensure that women get the care and attention they need and deserve. Discussion will include: Natural hormone replacement; osteoporosis; weight management; dietary changes to support your body and your hormones; vitamin therapies as alternative to hormones; and premenstrual syndrome.

Cost to attend this year's conference is \$30 per person. To register call (800) 543-WELL.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Blood pressure

William Beaumont Hospital needs people 18 and older with high blood pressure to volunteer for two research studies of new medications. All study-related health care is provided at no charge to participants. Call the Cardiovascular Disease division at Beaumont, Royal Oak at (248) 551-5991 or the Division of Preventive and Nutritional Medicine in Birmingham at (888) 807-8839.

Breast cancer

Postmenopausal women with an increased risk of developing breast cancer can take part in a national research study at William Beaumont Hospital that will compare the effectiveness of two drugs in preventing breast cancer. Volunteers will either take Tamoxifen, a drug approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to reduce the incidence of breast cancer in women at increased risk; or Raloxifene, which is approved by the FDA for treating osteoporosis, and has shown promise in reducing a woman's chance of getting breast cancer. Call (877) BEAT-CANCER for more information.

Coronary artery disease

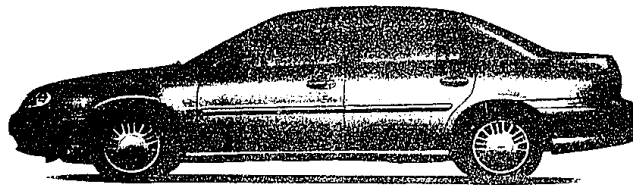
The Cardiovascular Disease division at William Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak is conducting a research study and needs volunteers who have coronary artery disease and/or elevated cholesterol levels. The study will test the effectiveness of a combination of a U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved medication that lowers cholesterol and an investigational medication that may improve blood flow to the heart. Prospective volunteers must have elevated cholesterol levels already confirmed by testing and must not have diabetes. All study-related healthcare will be provided to participants without charge. Call (248) 551-9161.

Diabetes

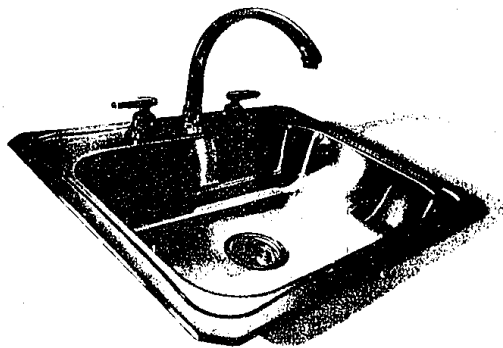
William Beaumont Hospital's Division of Preventive and Nutritional Medicine in Birmingham needs people with diabetes for research studies testing new oral medications to help lower their blood sugar levels. Volunteers will receive study-related health care without charge and will be compensated for their time and travel. Call (888) 807-8839.

Enlarged prostate

The Department of Urology at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak needs men with enlarged prostates to participate in a research study of a medication that may help ease the symptoms. Call (248) 651-3356 for details.



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