

Concussions among pre-teens and adolescents need more attention

By ACSH Staff — August 5, 2014



Concussions are a major and growing concern among

athletes, and have garnered much media attention recently. Two examples include the long-term effects of concussions and [new helmets](#) ^[1] intended to quantify cumulative impacts to the head. However, concussions among children and adolescents have not been as intensively studied as in adults. This is important because it is these age groups that are at increased risk for concussion, and among whom concussions are more likely to be severe. In fact, according to the CDC, about 65 percent of concussion cases seen in the emergency room are in children ages five to 18 years. They are also more likely to suffer subsequent concussions.

In order to [evaluate concussions](#) ^[2] in this age group, Dr. John O Kane of the University of Washington Sports Medicine Clinic and colleagues studied 351 female soccer players ages 11 to 14 from 2008 to 2012. There were 59 concussions sustained over this period, an incidence of about 13 percent per season. Furthermore, researchers reported that over half of those suffering concussions continued to play with symptoms and less than half sought medical attention. Dr. O Kane also pointed out that often, there is no medical coverage on site at youth sports events.

Symptoms of concussions vary on a wide scale, and may include headache, nausea, dizziness, mental foginess, difficulties with memory and concentration; they may include something as vague as unexplained fatigue. Treatment includes both physical and cognitive rest (days away from school, including homework) and recovery may take up to ten days, although in some cases this period may be longer. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that any pediatric or adolescent athlete who sustains a concussion should be evaluated by a healthcare professional, ideally a physician with experience in concussion management, and receive medical clearance before returning to play, and all 50 states have legislation in place mandating schools to have set procedures for dealing with concussions.

ACSH's Ariel Savransky had this to say: Clearly, more must be done to educate parents, coaches and players about the symptoms of concussions and the actions that should be taken in the case of suspected concussion. Players should not be put back in the game if they are exhibiting any symptoms of a concussion. Furthermore, it is imperative to require that medical professionals be in attendance at youth sports events as coaches and players themselves cannot be counted upon to

take appropriate action in the event of a concussion, as competing interest the desire to win a game may take precedence over the well-being of the player at that time. It s hard to figure out how a mandate to have measures in place to deal with concussions can be effectively implemented without the presence of someone with independent training in the subject. Given the fact that these young players are likely to suffer multiple concussions and the effects of a concussion are cumulative, educational efforts must focus on this age group so that these players do not suffer long-term damage.

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[1] <http://acsh.org/2014/03/newest-high-tech-gadget-aiming-quantify-cumulative-impacts-head/>

[2]

http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleID=1893942&utm_source=Silverchair%20Information%20System