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A major new study suggests there is a link between head injuries and long-term brain damage in former footballers. In the first study of its kind, researchers studied the brains of six deceased players known for their skill at heading the ball. They all developed dementia in later life. The Football Association has welcomed the research - as our health correspondent Smitha Mundasad reports.

but could doing this over and over again lead to long-term brain damage? That's a question the family of former England player Jeff asked has been campaigning to have answered. He died in 2002. He'd suffered from degenerative brain disease linked to repeatedly heading old, heavy footballs. If we can highlight it and push and push and push to get it recognise, not just the dad. It started about dad but it's about all these other families now, all these families are relying on us. We'll never stop, we'll never stop fighting for them. Now, in the first study of its kind, scientists looked at the brains of six lifelong footballers who developed dementia. When we examined their brains at autopsy we saw the thought of changes that are seen in text boxes, which are known as CDE, chronic traumatic and Kraftwerk. In the

first time a series of players have shown there is evidence that head injury has occurred earlier in their life which presumably has some impact on dementia. The football Association says one question that needs to be answered is whether degenerative brain diseases are more common in professional football is, and the FA says that's research it's determined to support. At some ex-footballers say action from the FA could not come soon enough. With three of the surviving members of England's 1966 World Cup winning team suffering from dementia, some say this work is now more urgent than ever. So what does this mean for people who like to kick a ball around a few times a week? We shouldn't forget that exercise and football is included in that, actually has a lot of benefits, it reduces your risk of cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes and indeed the mention in later life. So

that needs to be balanced against any risk that can come from doing that exercise. And the researchers are clear, the study did not analyse the risks to children. But with US soccer already recommending that children under 11 should not head footballers, and rugby already taking action on brain health, the question is whether it is now football's turn to do more about the long-term consequences of playing the game. Smitha Mundasad, BBC News.