**Heading football ‘can cause brain damage and dementia’**

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**By**[**David Trayner**](http://www.dailystar.co.uk/search/David+Trayner)/**Published 15th February 2017**

**FOOTBALLERS who repeatedly head the ball can end up suffering from dementia, a new study suggests.**

A potential cause of dementia thought to arise from blows to the head has – for the first time – been confirmed in a group of retired footballers following a small study.

Dawn Astle, daughter of former England and West Brom striker Jeff Astle, who died of a degenerative brain disease in 2002, aged 59, said such findings are no surprise.

She called for more research and criticised footballing authorities for an "indefensible and disgraceful" lack of action.

She said: "It is really indefensible and disgraceful. It really is.

“This isn't an arthritis or a bruised leg or a broken leg.

“People are dying. This is killing people."

The brains of six of the 14 retired players involved in the research – none of whom have been identified – underwent post mortem examinations.

Four were found to have chronic traumatic encephalopathy pathology, while all six had signs of Alzheimer's disease.

CTE can cause dementia and, like Alzheimer's, is characterised by a build-up of abnormal tau protein in the brain.

The rate of CTE detected in the footballers' brains was greater than the 12% average found in a previous study which looked at 268 brains from the general population.

Consultant psychiatrist Dr Don Williams, who ran the study from the Swansea service, said: "The results suggest that heading the ball over many years, a form of repetitive sub-concussive head injury, can result in the development of CTE and dementia.”