Guilt and Regret

*“Nothing is more wretched than the mind of a guilty man”*- Plautus. Whether you are being scorned by your boss or yelled at by a parent, no one likes the feeling of guilt. While this may come from many things, such as lying, being unfaithful in a relationship, or falsifying information, we as humans want to avoid the feeling of guilt as much as possible. In this case, we may be able to prevent millions of people across the nation from feeling this way. Anyone who has ever seen an injury occur can tell you that there is a feeling of guilt that follows, many people believe that they could have prevented the injury from happening or at least eased their pain. However, we know as spectators, there is nothing we can do. However, in this case, we may be able to prevent millions of people from feeling this way by addressing the dangers of concussions.

Many people believe that concussions are mild, or even nonexistent injuries, however, there are many sources that disagree with this false preconception. Even though concussion and brain related injuries have increased in awareness, doctors and scientists alike are still unaware of all the repercussions from these types of injuries. With most injuries, a medical professional can see how the person is recovering, however with a concussion, we aren’t able to physically monitor the progress of patients. This causes many issues such as falsifying medical reports in order to downplay the symptoms of the injury. Because of this, doctors and medical staff alike cannot accurately judge the recovery process of a concussion without full cooperation of the patient. This leads to many problems in practical medicine as well as athletic training. For example, in high school sports, athletes are at high risk for concussions for every athletic event they are exposed to. By way of the increased risks of a concussions, the probability of falsifying medical reports increases as well, this is due to the desire to continue playing the sport that these athletes participate in. This illustrates the many problems that occur in high school sports, which leads to the conclusion that due to the various unknown long-term negative effects, the difficult rehabilitation process, and the severe amount of risk that student-athletes are exposed to, I believe that the Utah High-School Activity Association (UHSAA) should monitor concussions and other traumatic brain injuries with caution and implement preventative measures in order to avoid the major complications that can occur from unawareness of the injury and its long-term effects.

Today documentaries are available at the touch of your fingers. Whether you watch them in your spare time or are studying for an exam of some sort, everyone at some point has seen a documentary in their life. In recent media, concussions and other sports-related injuries have become a very popular subject. The recent movie *Concussion*, starring Will Smith has sparked a large amount of controversy about these types of injuries. The movie in turn has great research and factual evidence to back up the stories that they are portraying. The main contention that was proven by this movie was that concussions truly are “The invisible injury” (Emily Tong.) While there are many tests such as the imPACT test that Tong shows us in her research, in high school sports, the training staff doesn’t have any tests that can are single-time-use and can 100 percent accurately diagnose a concussion. This causes medical professionals to run several cognitive tests on the patient prior and subsequent to the suspected injury. Tong states in her research that there is no way of knowing whether the patient is manipulating the medical exams in order to sway the doctor’s opinion, because as it was depicted in the movie ‘*Concussion’* and in other real-world examples, players of all degree and talent manipulate these tests for what seems to be the greater good at the time. However, while there are various costly short-term side effects to doing this, there are also extreme long-term side effects that we are unaware of, yet players are still choosing to falsify these reports.

There are great cognitive risks to a concussion that appear immediately, however, what is more concerning is that in years to come these players could be experiencing anxiety, depression, headaches, dizziness, dementia, and cognitive imbalance up to years after their injury. The simple truth is that we truly cannot completely diagnose a concussion, which is what creates such chaos in the High-School-sports world, however, if we don’t implement certain standards and procedures to prevent and protect players from concussions, then we are creating lifelong problems that these players are unaware of and will regret for the rest of their lives.

There are various ways that we can start to implement procedures and precautions to help prevent concussions. New helmets have been developed for football players that eliminate the risk of concussions by 50 percent. We can also create stricter enforcement of concussion related penalties, as well as increasing the severity of the penalty itself, this will cause a decrease in concussions and help prevent guilt of players and patrons throughout the United States.

At some point in their life everyone has gone through a trial of some sort. Whether it is feeling gloomy after a loved one has passed or getting into a life changing accident, everyone has experienced a setback in life. The recovery process is brutal, months if not years of physical therapy, and the adjustment to daily life is more than enough to cause serious mental damage. What youth don’t understand is that a concussion requires serious rehabilitation and immediately inflicts mental and physical damage to them, and that is if it is diagnosed in a timely and proper manner. However, if these youths decide to ignore the concussion altogether and stay in the game then the injury and rehabilitation process will be much worse.

A concussion will affect your body on a psychological and metabolic level, which creates an energy imbalance causing players to perform worse in their respective sport than before the injury occurred. This shows that there is no benefit to continue to play in these games as the players cognitive skills will be impaired almost to the point or past the point of being intoxicated as stated by Tong, and the energy level will be significantly decreased. Most high-school athletes are concerned when they will return to the playing field, however it is the academic side that they should be more concerned about. Sarah A. Dachtyl is a highly educated speech pathologist who conducted a study that monitored the recovery of students who have experienced a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and their return to academics.

Dachtyl found that it can take up to 6 months for a student who experienced a minor concussion to fully re-enter their regular academic routine. Many athletic trainers are not focused on the effects a concussion has on academics, this causes a lack of information and concern for the re-entry to academics. Dachtyl determined that a concussion can affect multiple aspects of a student’s ability to participate, learn, and perform well in school. In fact, the experience of learning and engaging in academic activities too soon after an injury such as a concussion may cause the symptoms to worsen or even reappear after a period of absence. This further emphasizes my latter contention that we should monitor these injuries more closely in order to prevent these types of ramifications. Any high-school can start doing this by creating rules that are directed toward ensuring the safety of the players.

As Sirius Black once said, “What’s life without a little risk?” While that statement may be true about life in general, it doesn’t apply towards concussions. As far as injuries go, I believe that we should avoid risk as much as possible. This being said, players are at risk for concussions for every sporting event that they participate in. The minute they step onto the field they are twice as likely to get a concussion compared to anywhere else. This alone is enough to want to create preventative measures for concussion, however this is not the biggest risk associated with concussions.

There is more risk that the players’ concussion will go undiagnosed than there is that they will actually receive a concussion according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC). This is due to many factors such as absence of symptoms, lack of cooperation by the player, discouragement of injuries by parents and coaches, and simply lack of knowledge by the training staff. By not diagnosing a concussion, when the player steps foot onto the field, the mortality rate is increased to 50 percent, which is far too much risk for any sport, much less a non-professional one.

In order to eliminate the risk, we need to educate these high-schools about the risks of concussions and how a game isn’t worth the life of one of the players, also, even if they go back in, their production will be significantly decreased due to the energy imbalance and metabolic effects of a concussion. Therefore, it is better to take the player out of the game completely rather than to risk their life by putting them back in. In lemans terms, you wouldn’t put a player back in if they had a broken leg, so why would you put one in who doesn’t have enough cognitive function to play? If the UHSAA will implement preventative equipment and measures, then we can eliminate a majority of the risk of concussions.

While there are various benefits to implementing these preventative measures, it is understandable that not all may feel the same way that I do. These measures may take a large amount of time to teach the training staff as well as all the players and coaches, and the equipment may be costly which could be detrimental to a high-school that is low on funding.

While I am an advocate of preventing concussions, I understand that all these reasons are feasible. However, I do believe that the value of a life is worth more time and money than can be measured. While the schools that are low on funding may not be able to purchase these advanced helmets, I do believe that they can spend the extra time teaching these players and coaches the proper signs and warnings of a concussion, and what to do if you feel like you might have a concussion. There are also tests that are donated to these schools for free, and I believe that if a school says that they can’t afford to purchase the necessary equipment, they can work around the budget and have these free options available at their school.

In summation, I truly believe that the UHSAA can develop a program that benefits high-school sport programs by educating them about concussions. This will in turn reduce concussions and mortality rates of high-school sports across the nation if not the world. It ultimately comes down to how much you value a human-life, is it worth the time and energy to create a program dedicated to the safety of youths? That will conclusively be up to you.

Works Cited

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