

FACING CONCUSSIONS HEAD ON

The Sports Concussion Center of New Jersey

As the parent of a student athlete, you worry about a lot: broken bones, chipped teeth, bruising wounds. But did you know that there's one injury so serious it could cause permanent brain damage — and you may never even know it happened?

It's true. Far more than a mere "bump on the head," concussions are serious injuries that require expert care for optimal recovery. In fact, as many as 3.8 million student athletes will sustain a concussion this year alone, with many of those injuries going undiagnosed or improperly managed.

"Sports concussion in youth has become a silent epidemic that is only now being uncovered," notes neuropsychologist and director of the Sports Concussion Center of New Jersey, Rosemarie Scolaro Moser, Ph.D.

"Student athletes begin playing sports at earlier ages and, what's more, they often play year-round multiple sports. As a result, the number of contact exposures has increased," Dr. Moser explains. "We know that children are more vulnerable

What is a Concussion?

A concussion is any alteration in mental state or consciousness that occurs as a result of a hit or jolt to the head. Signs of concussion may include, but are not limited to, feeling dazed or confused, dizziness, headache, nausea, fatigue, sensitivity to light or sound, visual disturbance, irritability, and attention, concentration and memory problems. Loss of consciousness is not necessary for a concussion.

than adults to the effects of concussion and we need to protect kids' brains so that they can be sharp into adulthood and participate in long and healthy athletic careers."

As the mother of a 26-year-old son who plays hockey, rides mountain bikes and participates in car race events, Dr. Moser understands the important role athletics play in the life of a child.

"I appreciate the importance of sports to build character, increase team skills and foster success in children's lives," says Dr. Moser. "But I also understand the importance of protecting kids' brains from the potentially fatal effects of concussion."

A Proactive Approach

The best course of treatment for a concussed student athlete begins before an injury has even been sustained.

"To help accurately determine whether student athletes have recovered from concussion, we should conduct baseline testing when they are healthy during the pre-season," Dr. Moser says. "Many schools have implemented these types of concussion testing programs, which document performance on memory, reaction time, processing speed and attention tasks."

"If a youth sustains a concussion, s/he can be retested to help determine when scores are back to pre-concussion levels. This type of assessment increases the accuracy in decisions about recovery, as many athletes who feel physically better may still have brains that are not fully healed."

Comprehensive Concussion Care

Recognized internationally as experts in concussion and brain injury, Dr. Moser and her colleagues provide a full continuum of care for student athletes, includ-



Rosemarie Scolaro Moser, PhD.

ing comprehensive neuropsychological evaluations, sports concussion testing, biofeedback, treatment of post-concussion syndrome, and return-to-play decisions.

"All kids in sports should participate in concussion education and management programs," Dr. Moser says. "There are things parents can do to protect their kids' brains with the right knowledge and health care services — and it's our top priority to give every child the benefit of a sharp brain and a lifelong enjoyment of sports."

To learn more about the Sports Concussion Center of New Jersey, or to schedule baseline concussion testing, please call 609.895.1076.

Visit the website at www.SportsConcussionNJ.com.

