

CTE (Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy) and How It Affects Mood Disorders

CTE is a progressive, degenerative disease which affects the brains of people who have suffered repetitive concussions and traumatic brain injuries commonly seen in contact sports, i.e. football. I have 2 boys who played pop Warner, grammar school and high school football. One of my boys was offered a football scholarship. Two days before he was to report for preseason training camp, he decided to withdraw from the University and its football program. One of my sons received 2 concussions during his years of playing the sport. If I knew then what I know now, no way would my sons have played football. Chronic traumatic brain injuries are a condition of the brain which persists over a period of years or decades and is the result of traumatic impacts to the cranium. Certain areas of the brain, through repetitive trauma, are susceptible to atrophy and enlargement.

The symptoms of CTE can be debilitating and may have life changing effects for both the individual and for his or her family. Some of the most common include loss of memory, difficulty controlling impulsive, erratic behavior, impaired judgement, behavioral issues to include aggression and depression, difficulty with balance and a gradual onset of dementia. An individual with CTE may mistakenly equate the symptoms to normal process of aging or might receive a wrong diagnosis that may have symptoms similar to other conditions such as Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease. CTE has been diagnosed in several notable cases. It has received widespread media, including the suicide deaths of NFL player Junior Seau and most recently Aaron Hernandez.

Scientists have known that more years playing tackle football is associated with thinking and memory problems later in life. Studies for the first time are calculating that the number of years playing football can measure the severity of the disease and its effect on the brain. Some researchers are looking at broader populations of people who have had traumatic brain injury, not just football players, to determine whether participation in collision as opposed to genetics or other factors is linked to the development of CTE.

The above-mentioned mental disabilities are a prime example of how mental illnesses not only originate from physiological inherited circumstances, but also through self-inflicted behavior. The amount of damage caused by repetitive trauma to the head is unknown at this time. However, the Brain Injury Research Institute was the first to diagnose CTE in professional sports and presently only diagnosed at the time of autopsy. Grants from undisclosed contributors, probably professional athletic organizations, have helped to further the research to better understand this injury. Diagnostic tests are presently being held to identify the signs of early onset of CTE. Athletes, military personnel and others who are at risk for developing this condition are subjects that are now being observed.

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