

Concussion – More Than a Bump on the Head

ST. CATHARINES, January 5, 2016 - “I got my bell rung, I saw stars or I simply got a bump on the head” is what athletes would say after taking a hard hit or sustaining a blow to the head. More times than not the athlete returned to play without a second thought, without knowing that there could be serious life-long debilitating effects.

The potential of long-term effects following concussion is one of the focal points of the newly-released movie “Concussion.” In this movie, actor Will Smith portrays Bennet Omalu a courageous doctor who battles against efforts by the National Football League to suppress his research on brain damage sustained by professional football players. Omalu’s autopsies of former NFL football players led to the discovery of Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) a degenerative brain disease that is believed to be linked to concussions.

“As this movie points out, concussions are more than a bump on the head and need to be taken seriously. It is only in the past several years that concussions have started to gain media attention. Coaches, athletes, students and parents are becoming more aware that concussions need to be treated as a serious injury,” states Ruth Wilcock, Executive Director of the Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA).

It is also important to recognize that a concussion is a brain injury. According to the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation, concussions are the most common form of traumatic brain injuries. While most people will recover from a concussion within one to several weeks, about fifteen percent (15%) of people with concussion will continue to experience significant symptoms beyond three months. Some people can experience troublesome symptoms for much longer, which are called persistent symptoms and can sometimes cause considerable distress for the individual and their family.

“In our work at OBIA we see first-hand the devastating effects that concussions can have on children, youth and adults.” Wilcock further notes “that it is important to recognize that concussions are not only caused by a sports-related injury. Concussions can also be sustained through motor vehicle collisions, falls and workplace accidents.”

The movie “Concussion” comes on the heels of Bill 149, Rowan’s Law, which was introduced in the Ontario Legislature on November 25, 2015. Bill 149 honours Rowan Stringer, a high school athlete who died as a result of sustaining a concussion after a rugby game. Wilcock states that “Ontario has the opportunity to become a leader in addressing concussion given that this would become the first concussion legislation in Canada.” Wilcock also agrees with a statement MPP Lisa MacLeod made that “*Rowan’s Law could save lives*”.

What to Do If a Concussion is suspected:

- Stop/remove the person from the activity at once
- Seek medical advice/attention immediately

Quick Facts about Concussion

- A concussion is a brain injury
- Without proper treatment and management a concussion can result in permanent problems and seriously affect one's quality of life.

Long term consequences can include:**Cognitive**

1. Memory Issues
2. Concentration
3. Learning Complication -inability to comprehend
4. Disorganization
5. Initiation Loss
6. Issues with sequencing

Emotional/Psychological

1. Depression
2. Anxiety
3. Impulsivity
4. Quick Temper
5. Inability to regulate emotions

Physical

1. Headaches
2. In a fog
3. Fatigue
4. Sensitivity to light
5. Sensitivity to noise
6. Overstimulation
7. Cannot multi-task

Source: Ontario Brain Injury Association

About OBIA: The Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA) is a provincial not-for profit, charitable organization. Its mission is to enhance the lives of Ontarians living with the effects of acquired brain injury (ABI) through education, awareness and support. OBIA's services include: training programs for survivors, caregivers and professionals; industry workshops and conferences; applied research on ABI in the province of Ontario; 1-800 toll free helpline; personal advocacy; a province-wide peer support program for people living with ABI; and capacity building programs for our 21 affiliated community brain injury associations. www.obia.ca

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