

Stop the violence and play hockey

December 19 2011

The tradition of fighting in hockey should be stopped, as research shows that repeated head trauma causes severe and progressive brain damage, states an editorial in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

"The tragic story of Sidney Crosby's layoff due to concussions has not been sufficient for society to hang its head in shame and stop violent play immediately," writes Dr. Rajendra Kale, a neurologist and Interim Editor-in-Chief, [CMAJ](#).

A growing body of research on both hockey players and boxers indicates clearly that blows to the head cause irreversible damage, a condition called [chronic traumatic encephalopathy](#) (CTE).

"What researchers from the Center for the Study of Traumatic Encephalopathy, Boston University School of Medicine, have found in the brains of three prominent hockey players — Rick Martin, Reggie Fleming and Bob Probert — should be enough to sway minds to impose a ban on all forms of intentional [head trauma](#), including fighting, along with severe deterrent penalties such as lengthy suspensions for breaches," writes Dr. Kale.

Supporters of fighting might say that the game will be less interesting without intentional hits. However, a similar argument that stated that banning smoking in bars and restaurants would deter customers did not come true; rather, rates of hospital admissions for heart attacks and lung diseases decreased.

"How many brains should researchers have to slice up to convince NHL players that they are at risk of permanent and progressive [brain damage](#)?", concludes Dr. Kale. "Should we not stop the violence now and get on with the main objective of hockey, which is scoring goals?"

More information: www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.112081

Provided by Canadian Medical Association Journal

Citation: Stop the violence and play hockey (2011, December 19) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-12-violence-hockey.html>

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