

Health and law expert: NFL not alone in handling concussions as 'benign' problems

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More than 2,000 former football players are suing the National Football League, saying the league should have taken action earlier to deal with injuries related to concussions more seriously.

But if a lack of speed in tackling concussions warrants criticism, the NFL isn't the only player deserving a penalty, according to a study co-authored by health care and law expert David Orentlicher, who teaches at Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law in Indianapolis.

Neurologists were also slow in sounding the alarm, and for decades, concussions were viewed as a "benign phenomenon," according to Orentlicher.

Orentlicher's study "Concussion and Football: Failures to Respond by the NFL and the Medical Profession," co-authored by William S. David of Harvard Medical School, traces the evolution of the medical understanding of concussion over the past several decades.

"In reviewing the response of the [National Football League](#) to concussion, one can easily think that the league was too slow to worry about the medical consequences of [head trauma](#)," according to the study published in this month's [Social Science Research](#) Network. "But the extent to which its response was unreasonable is unclear. If many medical experts did not worry about concussions, it is difficult to fault the NFL for not worrying either."

"Still one can question the NFL's failure to adopt concussion guidelines in the late 1990s when medical experts did issue guidelines," Orentlicher said.

Provided by Indiana University

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