

## New concussion treatment could change how head injuries are treated

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Researchers at the University at Buffalo are studying how low level exercise -- instead of total rest -- may be a more effective treatment for concussion.

The standard of care for acute concussion may undergo a dramatic change, depending on the results of a new exercise treatment that physicians at the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at the University at Buffalo have developed and begun testing. It is the first randomized, controlled clinical trial of this exercise treatment for concussion.



The clinical trial will test the new treatment on any 13- to 17-year-old adolescent who has experienced a <u>concussion</u>, whether or not it resulted from participating in a sport.

Funded by the Ralph C. Wilson Foundation and the Program for Understanding Childhood Concussion and Stroke, the study is being conducted by physicians at UBMD Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine (UBMD Ortho), part of the practice plan of the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at UB.

## **Seeking participants**

Western New York adolescents who have had a concussion should contact UBMD Ortho as soon as possible after the injury so that they can be seen soon, often within a day or two.

The trial will continue until the summer of 2016.

"If you're an adolescent who has experienced a concussion in the last few days either on the field or off, we want to see you ASAP," said John Leddy, MD, principal investigator on the study. Leddy is medical director of the UB Concussion Management Clinic, a physician with UBMD Ortho, and clinical professor in the Department of Orthopaedics in the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at UB.

Interested parents should contact the UB Concussion Management Clinic at 716-829-5499 during business hours if their child meets these criteria.

The study is also being conducted through the University of Manitoba, so the new treatment is available to adolescents in the vicinity of Winnipeg, Canada.



## **Pro-active approach**

"We take a pro-active approach to concussion," Leddy said. "We treat concussion rather than do nothing."

The goal of the clinical trial is to evaluate for the first time a treatment protocol for concussion. If successful, the results may change the way concussions are treated.

The trial focuses on adolescents because, Leddy explained, they are the most vulnerable age group for concussions, and take the longest time to recover.

"Until recently, the standard of care in concussion has been to tell individuals who have suffered concussions to go home and rest until the symptoms go away," he explained. "Our research has demonstrated that some activity is actually necessary to promote recovery."

But just how much activity is still unknown. "We know that activity helps to speed recovery, but we also know too much activity prevents it," explained Barry Willer, PhD, director of research for the UB Concussion Management Clinic and professor in the Department of Psychiatry, who coordinates the research study design. "A major goal of our research is to determine how much activity, and what activity, is best."

## **Exercise during recovery**

Julia Whipple, a 16-year-old honors student at Hamburg High School, was among the first adolescents to enroll. She was injured playing soccer, one of the most common sports for concussion injuries.



"When I heard that I would be allowed to continue with some exercise while I recovered, I was excited," said Julia, who has completed the study and recovered. "I didn't want to just go home to my bedroom and wait for symptoms to disappear. It was fun! They had me wear this cool watch that monitored my activity and heart rate."

Julia's mother, Christina, added, "We were pleased to see Julia recover as quickly as she did. We were also more confident knowing that the UB Concussion Management Clinic is such a leader in research on concussion."

Provided by University at Buffalo

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