

# Study shows many parents in the dark about concussions

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Despite the large volume of information about sports related concussions on the Internet, many parents and guardians of young athletes have a limited understanding of concussions, according to a study co-authored by a faculty member of UTA's College of Nursing and Health Innovation.

In the study, which was published in May in the Journal of Applied Behavioral Research, Cynthia Trowbridge, an associate professor of kinesiology and athletic trainer, and co-author Sheetal J. Patel of Stanford University, found that a significant number of caregivers have a limited understanding of concussions and their impact on a child's future.

"They did understand that it's a severe injury but they didn't understand how susceptible patients are," said Trowbridge, a noted expert on concussions in middle and high school athletes. "We found out that despite the fact that all parents had read some brochure or seen some TV show about concussions they had a low self efficacy about awareness. They tended not to know that concussions are associated with all sports, including track and field, volleyball and swimming."

Sports related concussions account for 53 percent of all head injuries in young people under the age of 19, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. The CDC estimates that there are between 1.6 and 3.8 million sports related injuries among young people each year.

Concussions have received heightened attention in recent years because of the large number of retired professional football players who have sued the National Football League. These retired players claim that in some instances they were sent back into games despite the fact that their coaches knew there was a reasonable chance they may have suffered concussions on the gridiron.

In each of the 50 states there are laws requiring teams to take out athletes who may have suffered concussions. The decision is often made by members of the [concussion](#) care team, a group of objective health care professionals that includes a physician, an advanced practice nurse and an athletic trainer.

"We live in an age in which parents recognize more than ever the importance of athletics in instilling skills like discipline, concentration, team work and leadership in [young people](#)," said Anne Bavier, dean of the College of Nursing and Health Innovation. "But we need to be just as mindful about the kinds of dangerous, unseen injuries that come from playing sports. This study is a useful tool for building awareness and arming parents with some really good information."

Trowbridge said they were motivated to do the study to find out what caregivers understand about concussions and how to better educate them so they can be more effective in looking for symptoms or other possible signs of trouble.

"It's important to involve not only the athletes but the caregivers," said Trowbridge. "It is the [caregiver](#) that knows the child the best and can often recognize the signs and symptoms."

She added that studies show many [young athletes](#) do not always tell the truth about their symptoms because they want to continue playing.

"We are still learning how concussion symptoms resolve but we know that they don't get better by sending someone right back in with symptoms," Trowbridge said. "Sports is so magical and so many things can be learned from sports, but we have to give the caregivers the tools to be able to protect the youth [athlete](#) when they can't protect themselves."

Trowbridge said caregivers should be discriminating when picking physicians to examine their children for possible concussions, adding that not all physicians understand concussions. She encourages them to consult with neurologists, primary care physicians who specialize in sports medicine and concussion specialists when seeking medical advice.

Provided by University of Texas at Arlington

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