

College football players underestimate risk of injury and concussion

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College football players may underestimate their risk of injury and concussion, according to a new study published today in *JAMA Network Open*.

Christine Baugh, Ph.D., MPH, assistant professor of medicine at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and member of the CU Center for Bioethics and Humanities, is the corresponding author of the article, "Accuracy of US College Football Players' Estimates of Their Risk of Concussion or Injury."

Baugh and co-authors report on [survey results](#) of 296 [college football players](#) from four teams in the Power 5 Conferences of the National Collegiate Athletic Association. Athletes were surveyed in 2017. The researchers found that between 43 percent and 91 percent of respondents underestimated their risk of [injury](#) and between 42 percent and 63 percent underestimated their risk of concussion.

To measure the accuracy of football players' risk estimations, the researchers modeled individual athletes' probabilities of sustaining a concussion or injury and compared model estimates to [athlete](#) perceptions. While recognizing that many people underestimate health risks, the authors point out that the risks college football athletes face may be more severe or debilitating than those faced by many in the general population. Given this elevated risk profile, they say it is concerning that athletes tend to underestimate the likelihood of these risks. These results raise questions about informed consent and how much risk should be acceptable in the context of a game, Baugh and her co-authors write.

"That athletes underestimated their risk of concussion and injury in this study raises important ethical considerations," Baugh and her colleagues write. "What is the threshold for college athletes to be sufficiently informed of the risks and benefits of [football](#) to make decisions that align with their values and preferences?"

More information: Christine M. Baugh et al. Accuracy of US College Football Players' Estimates of Their Risk of Concussion or Injury.

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