

NFL funding study on its most common injury: hamstrings

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The NFL is funding a study that will investigate the prevention and treatment of hamstring injuries.

They are the most common NFL injuries and nearly 75% of them result in missed time.

The league's Scientific Advisory Board on Thursday announced a four-year, \$4 million award to a team of medical researchers led by the University of Wisconsin. The study is part of the NFL's effort to better understand and prevent lower-extremity injuries, including soft tissue strains such as hamstrings.

"When you look at the burden of injury overall, lower-extremity injuries and strains are the No. 1 time-loss injury in the NFL. It's a huge problem that keeps our players off the field, so it's become a priority of ours," NFL chief medical officer Dr. Allen Sills told The Associated Press before the announcement.

Leigh Weiss, the New York Giants director of rehab and chair of the NFL's soft tissue injury task force, hopes the research leads to a better understanding of "who gets hurt, how do they get hurt and what's their recovery time look like."

"Can we learn more about each individual injury to help drive better treatment, better rehabilitation and ultimately reduce injuries because these injuries have a 20-25% recurrence rate?" he said. " These are

questions we're trying to answer with science."

Hamstring injuries typically occur more among skill players who run at higher speeds, but players at other positions are also susceptible.

"Different types of players, different types of exposures, it's complex," Sills said.

Added Weiss: "We've taken early findings and gone back to coaches, medical staffs and players and talked about the importance of gradual ramp up in injury prevention."

Research will be led by Bryan Heiderscheit of the University of Wisconsin Orthopedics and Badger Athletic Performance in partnership with David Opar of Australian Catholic University SPRINT Centre and Silvia Blemker, co-founder of Springbok Analytics.

"The findings that are produced will be applicable to other sports," Sills said. "We think this can be broadly shared and impact sports at all levels."

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