

# Experts call for increased research and funding for concussion treatment

August 4 2016, by Anne Dreyfuss

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Increased research and clinical funding is necessary to better understand the epidemiology of concussions and improve treatment following injury, according to a recent editorial co-authored by Dr. David Cifu, chair of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine.

The editorial, titled "Repeated Concussions: Time to Spur Action among Vulnerable Veterans," was published in the August issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*. It emerged from a cyber seminar hosted by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs that Cifu participated in on June 30 along with forensic pathologist Dr. Bennet Omalu. Omalu's research on concussions in the National Football League inspired the 2015 major motion picture "Concussion" starring Will Smith.

"It is a call for increased awareness of concussions among physicians and researchers," Cifu said. "It is also a call for an increase in both research and clinical funding in order to better understand the epidemiology of the problem and improve interventions. It is a call to arms."

The editorial references an increase in concussions in the civilian sector from sports and [motor vehicle accidents](#), and in the military sector due to a rise in the use of improvised explosive devices during combat. "Since 2000, there have been 344,030 medical diagnoses of traumatic brain injuries in the U.S. armed forces," the authors wrote in the editorial. "Brain injuries are a major concern in the U.S."

Traumatic brain injury is a major cause of death and disability in the United States, contributing to about 30 percent of all injury deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Those who survive the injury can face short-term effects such as headaches and dizziness as well as non-resolving disabilities such as attentional defects, depression and increased risk for dementia.

"There is increasing concern by the public and the government about the incidence and management of concussions," Cifu said.

Cifu is the principal investigator on a \$62.2 million federally funded [concussion](#)-focused grant involving multiple universities, military installations and veterans' hospitals that aims to better understand how to prevent, diagnose and treat brain injuries. The consortium is focused on concussions that have been sustained in military combat, but it also looks at concussions sustained in the civilian and sports sectors.

**More information:** Uchenna S. Uchendu et al. Repeated Concussions: Time to Spur Action Among Vulnerable Veterans, *American Journal of Public Health* (2016). [DOI: 10.2105/AJPH.2016.303293](https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303293)

Provided by Virginia Commonwealth University

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