

USAFB Blog: Risk of CTE does not equate to younger levels (<http://goo.gl/sVliYs>)

12/10/2015

The science behind concussions and their relation to the development of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) is growing steadily but remains at an early stage.

Neurosurgeon Dr. Julian Bailes looks at the data and comes to a much different conclusion than a longtime colleague whose story is told in an upcoming Hollywood movie.

“I’m a big believer in the benefits of organized sports and the benefits of football. I have two children who play football, and I believe football is safer than it’s ever been,” Bailes, chairman of neurosurgery at the NorthShore Neurological Institute, [said earlier this week on a conference call with reporters](#).

Bailes, who is the medical director for Pop Warner Little Scholars and portrayed by Alec Baldwin in the film “Concussion,” told reporters that CTE appears to be the result of years of high-impact collisions and not from the levels of forces created by youth players.

He was speaking in response to Dr. Bennet Omalu, the movie’s focal character [who wrote in the New York Times](#) that tackle football, hockey, mixed martial arts and other contact sports should be banned for anyone under age 18. Bailes said he won’t extrapolate [the fewer than 200 documented cases of CTE in the past 60 years](#) to all NFL players – let alone youth and high school players.

“We don’t know the prevalence of CTE. I have said and I believe that CTE is a risk in a minority of NFL players and hopefully in a group of players who are in a now bygone era, meaning that the reforms in the NFL that began in 2009, as a result of our work and others’ work, has resulted in sweeping changes,” Bailes said. “Those that have been tested were those who the family brought forward after death thinking that they had CTE, thinking they were symptomatic, thinking they were showing signs and symptoms, so it’s a very skewed, very biased sample if you look at it scientifically or epistemologically. We don’t know the real prevalence.”

SEE ALSO: [Doctors speak out against how concussions are portrayed in the media](#)

SEE ALSO: [Dr. Julian Bailes discusses CTE and youth sports on ESPN's Mike & Mike](#)

LISTEN: Mike Golic, Mike Greenburg, Michael Smith and Jemele Hill discuss this topic on “Mike & Mike” radio show

The American Academy of Pediatrics, which represents more than 64,000 primary care pediatricians and other professionals dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of children [in October released a policy statement](#) that does not set a minimum age for participation.

The AAP’s guidelines include calls for proper tackling, enforcement of rules and the availability of flag football along with education for players, parent and coaches.

The AAP also noted that delaying the introduction of tackling until a certain age may reduce the risk of injury for certain ages but “could lead to even higher rates of injury ... if players have their first tackling experiences when they are older, stronger and bigger.”

“It’s this paradox that makes it so important for leagues to teach proper tackling technique and skills to avoid and absorb tackles,” Dr. Greg Landry said in the AAP statement.

While the medical community continues to research and learn more about head injuries and CTE for the good of all sports, USA Football continues to be proactive with medically endorsed and innovative programs keeping football fun.

Through USA Football’s Heads Up Football program, every member of the football community is offered instruction on Heads Up Tackling and Heads Up Blocking techniques; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concussion recognition and response protocols; sudden cardiac arrest protocols; heat and hydration education; and instruction on proper helmet and shoulder pad fitting.

USA Football’s programs and resources benefit more than 1 million youth and high school players, coaches and parents to establish standards founded in the best available science.

USA Football also operates [NFL FLAG](#), which brings a fast-paced, non-contact version of the sport to more than 265,000 U.S. children ages 5-17.

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