



CONCUSSION – THE SILENT DESTROYER

We have represented people in motor vehicle, slip and fall and other types of accidents where they have suffered head injuries. Often times, the injury is not so extensive as to cause skull fracture or an intra-cranial bleed and, therefore, would not be detected on a CT Scan or MRI. Nonetheless, the affects of these injuries are significant upon the lives of those who suffer them.

Football players and athletes are not the only persons who suffer concussions. As reported on www.CNNHealth.com on January 27, 2009, the best medical definition for a concussion is a “jarring blow to the head that temporarily stuns the senses, occasionally leading to unconsciousness.” The report further indicates that a concussion is an invisible injury, impossible to test – no MRI, no CT Scan can detect it.

In the past, various different names have been given to these injuries such as Post-Concussive Syndrome or Mild Traumatic Brain Injury. The Center for the Study of Traumatic Encephalopathy has coined a new name, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE). Whatever you call it, the symptoms that result from these types of brain injuries include memory loss, emotional problems, erratic behavior, depression and loss of impulse control.

Recently, the Center for the Study of Traumatic Encephalopathy (CSTE) at the Boston University School of Medicine, studied brains of six (6) ex-NFL athletes posthumously, all of whom died at a young age. In 6 out of 6 cases, CTE was found. Dr. Ann McKee, a neuropathologist at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Bedford, Massachusetts, and co-director of CSTE, says that what she has seen in the brains of these former NFL players closely resemble what might be found in the brain of an 80 year old with dementia. The damage affects the parts of the brain that control emotion, rage, hyper-sexuality, even breathing, and that this disease progresses even after the injury and eventually kills brain cells.

When we represent individuals who have suffered injuries such as this, we closely monitor the medical care they are receiving and assist in recommending professionals who may best be able to assist. We often suggest neuropsychological examination, results of which can guide medical practitioners in what form of neurocognitive therapy can be given to help our clients recover from these devastating injuries.

These injuries are difficult to prove because, as earlier stated, standard medical diagnostic testing will not reveal the injury. Instead, aggressive advocacy, along with the assistance of expert medical practitioners is necessary to prove the significant affect that these injuries can have on an individual's life.