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NFL HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE—FEBRUARY 19, 2014

TEAM MEDICAL STAFFS PREPARE FOR COMBINE

As the 2014 NFL Scouting Combine begins this week, team medical staffs are preparing for their role in the event, evaluating NFL prospects to determine their overall health.

“The Combine allows team physicians to evaluate players medically and on the musculoskeletal side to understand any previous illnesses or injuries, understand any current problems, and also to determine their readiness to be considered for NFL play,” according to Seattle Seahawks team physician [DR. STANLEY HERRING](#). “Each team is allowed the opportunity to examine every player. It’s a collegial environment. We examine players in groups and we discuss their histories, their injuries, their surgeries, their rehabilitation and try to determine their current healthcare status and their readiness to continue to play football.”

[DR. MATTHEW MATAVA](#), St. Louis Rams team physician and President of the [NFL Physicians Society](#) spoke about his role, saying “Each team’s medical staff performs a thorough history and physical examination of all players at the Combine. A comprehensive battery of tests, x-rays, and MRIs is also performed. Some of these tests are done routinely in all players, others are obtained based on the player’s history and/or physical examination. Once all of this information is compiled, each player is assigned a medical grade by the head team physician, unique to each team, which is used to categorize the players’ medical and orthopedic health. This grade is used to objectively assess the player’s predicted ability to participate as a professional football player as well as to assign relative risk for future medical problems. This information is shared with team’s general manager, head coach, and personnel director as one component of the player’s overall draft grade that is formulated by the team.”

The Combine begins tomorrow in Indianapolis.

STUDY LOOKS AT HELMET DESIGN FOR REDUCING CONCUSSIONS

A new study published in the *Journal of Neurosurgery* found that football helmets can be designed to reduce the risk of concussions. Before this research, no data had been collected to prove that helmet design could affect football players’ risk of concussion.

The study compared the relative risk of concussion for players wearing two different types of helmets, analyzing head impact data compiled from eight collegiate football teams over six years. All players either wore a Riddell VSR4 or Riddell Revolution helmet, and sensors in the helmets measured head acceleration for each impact players experienced.

“Controlling for head impacts allows you to compare apples to apples,” said **STEVE ROWSON PH. D.**, lead author of the study. “For example, you’re not comparing a player in one helmet who rarely gets hit to a player in another helmet type who frequently gets hit.”

Players in the Revolution helmets had lower head acceleration resulting from impact than players in the VSR4 helmets. The authors attribute this to the Revolution helmets better modulating the energy transfer from the impact to the head, thus reducing concussion risk. The study stresses that no helmet will be able to prevent all concussions, and better helmet design is one of many strategies that play a role in reducing concussions in football.

“The most effective strategies are altering league rules and teaching players better techniques. These strategies focus on reducing the number of head impacts that players experience,” said **STEFAN DUMA PH. D.**, one of the study’s authors. “However, head impacts in football will always occur, even with the best rules and technique. This is where improving helmet design to best reduce concussion risk becomes critical. Our data clearly demonstrates that this is possible.”

Find the full *Journal of Neurosurgery* study [here](#).

DEFENSE AND VETERANS BRAIN INJURY CENTER RELEASES CARE GUIDANCE FOR CONCUSSIONS

The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center recently compiled new standards for treating concussions with input from academic experts, sports concussion clinicians and traumatic brain injury experts.

The clinical recommendations include a how-to manual on how to return to the pre-injury activity in a “staged, stepwise approach [to] increase your activity so your body can handle the increase,” said **KATHY HELMICK**, the center’s deputy director.

The recommendations define what safe rest means for the brain and what to do and what to avoid at home, Helmick said, adding that 24 hours is the minimum for rest.

For the full American Forces Press Service story, click [here](#).

For more information on the NFL’s health and safety work, please visit www.nflevolution.com.

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