

Head shots - Sporting volunteers needed to assess the impact of head injuries

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Researchers from the University of Birmingham are looking for West Midlands sports teams to take part in a major project to help amateur athletes recover more safely from concussions and head injuries.

The team from the School of Sport and Exercise Sciences are working to develop a computerised test that allows athletes to assess whether a player may be suffering from the effects of a concussion.

This will help amateur athletes check whether they are safe to return to playing sport.

Anyone volunteering will be asked to complete a series of cognitive attention and memory tests, as well as answer some questions about their injuries. The main aim is to offer every athlete appropriate tests to assess head injuries, enabling them to enjoy and succeed at their sport, but stay safe.

Dr Martin Edwards who is leading the project comments: "Even for professional athletes who have access to high quality medical care, the desire to return to play as soon as possible can lead to them risking their health. Making the right decision is much more difficult for the thousands of amateur athletes who compete every week in sports like rugby, martial arts and horse riding. Very often the obvious symptoms of concussion can subside, but the potential risks remain. Returning to sport while suffering from the effects of concussion can place an athlete at risk of more serious head injury".

Concussion occurs as a consequence of the brain being compressed and stretched rapidly within the skull following an impact between the head and an object moving in opposite directions. This rapid movement of the brain can lead to neural damage and can cause symptoms including headaches, memory and concentration difficulties, loss of consciousness, or nausea.

Current tests for sports concussion involve assessments of memory and attention. The Birmingham team wants to see whether their extended tool which also includes tests of an athlete's decision making capability can help pick up symptoms of concussion more effectively.

Mareen Weber comments: "We are really keen to get local sports teams involved with the project, as we hope our results will make contact sports safer for the thousands of people who compete across the West Midlands every week. We are particularly keen to speak to players from sports like rugby, boxing, horseriding and football where head injuries can be a problem, but anyone who plays sport can get involved."

Anyone interesting in taking part in the project should contact Mareen on 0121 4145315 or via email at injury.sport@gmail.com (<mailto:njury.sport@gmail.com>)

For further media information contact Ben Hill, Press Officer, University of Birmingham, Tel 0121 414 5134, Mob 07789 921 163

NOTES TO EDITORS

The University of Birmingham

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