EDITORIAL

In Search of the Holy Grail in Concussion Management

Each week I look forward to receiving in my e-mail inbox the latest blog posts from SMR: In the Lab & In the Field (http://www.sportsmedres.org). If you do not know what this is about, I encourage you to check out their website and subscribe. The group is led by University of Delaware graduates Drs. Jeff Driban and Steve Thomas and a team of writers who, among other things, provide summaries of recent articles, events, and happenings in the sports medicine world. It’s worth the subscription!

A recent post was titled “Blood Test Could Help Provide Information on Prolonged Concussion Recovery.” As a researcher who studies concussions in soccer players, this particular headline caught my attention. The blog post summarizes a recent online release of an article published in the journal Neurology. I encourage all of our readers to check it out. The bottom-line message is that elevated plasma tau concentrations within 6 hours of sport-related concussion were associated with prolonged return-to-play in their collegiate athlete population. This is terrific evidence and provides clinicians and researchers with an important step in the direction of finding the “Holy Grail” in concussion management. Will clinicians someday soon rely on a simple sideline blood test or another indicator to assist them in the diagnosis of concussions? How cool would that be? This latest finding from the report by Gill et al. will at least provide front-line sports health care professionals with an important tool to help better guide their treatment timetables and graduated return-to-play protocols. It is remarkable the progress that has been made with regard to concussion prevention, assessment, and management over the past 10 years. I have written several editorials in Athletic Training & Sports Health Care on this very topic. The findings of Gill et al. certainly deserve attention.

Back in October 2016, I was fortunate to have attended the 5th International Consensus Conference on Concussion in Sport held in Berlin, Germany. Gathered there were more than 400 of the world’s leading experts on concussion in sport; needless to say, I was humbled to be among them. It was also a chance for me to spread the word about Athletic Training & Sports Health Care and to solicit international submissions from these leading research groups. This meeting of “concussionologists” (a term coined by Patricios et al. in a 2013 editorial) is held every 4 years, usually in a European city, and is sponsored by many sport-organizing bodies world-
wide, including the International Olympic Committee. The conference involves two primary objectives: (1) to present a summary of new evidence-based research that covers all aspects of concussions, including definition, management, investigations, treatment, return-to-play protocol, prevention, and knowledge transfer, and (2) to reach an agreement among the conference participants in developing a Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sports, a document that would then be used by physicians and health care professionals involved in the care of injured athletes at the recreational, elite, or professional level. Although the agenda was robust and the evidence presented there intriguing, conference attendees were left with the sense that there is still so much more work to be done in search of the “Holy Grail” in concussion management. I promise not to leak any of the consensus recommendations, but do encourage our readers to stay tuned because the 2016 Consensus Statement is soon to be released (Spring 2017) and will drive concussion prevention, assessment, and management policy for the next 4 years. In the meantime, the search continues!

REFERENCES


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