



Rugby and brain health

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SESSION OBJECTIVES

- Overview of the current state of the science
- Specific understanding as it pertains to Rugby
- Review of key recent publications

What is known?

What is unknown?

What is agreed?

What is disputed?

LOOKING BACK THEN FORWARD



Concussion and chronic traumatic encephalopathy: International Rugby Board's response

Martin Raftery

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The IRB accepts that a risk is associated with head injury and concussion even if this risk is unquantifiable and unknown. As a responsible governing body the IRB will not delay action until irrefutable evidence is available but rather act prudently when evidence has been collected to an acceptable level. As such the IRB have developed a risk management strategy based on the current available evidence.

2014 IRB Position Statement on CTE

The IRB as the Governing Body does recognize the proposed link between repetitive head injuries and dementia. The IRB acknowledges that studies on boxers report an association between high levels of exposure to head injury and long term neurological problems. Further we acknowledge the autopsy based studies in contact sports, such as American Football, report an association between repetitive head injuries and neuro-degenerative disease.

Recognizing this potential link the IRB has adopted a proactive approach whilst awaiting further insight from more detailed research. The initiatives implemented include:

0. *commissioning of an independent Safety Scientist to review the Laws, Regulations and Directives of the game to review that Rugby is doing everything possible within the fabric of the game to reduce head impact events especially illegal head impact events. This review has been completed and resulted in a positive report.*
1. *education of key stakeholders, doctors, players, coaches and referees regarding protection of the head and the Recognise and Remove message*

Finally the IRB supports ongoing research to assist in identifying:

0. *the true incidence of these health issues in current and former players*
 1. *which athletes might be most at risk*
 2. *what other factors may influence long term outcomes and*
 3. *at what level of head impact exposure (number and size) might risk be increased.*