

## **Concussions, sports and kids the topic of discussion at Braley Centre**

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Concussions may be an unfortunate part of youth sports but they don't necessarily have to lead to life-changing health impacts.

That's one of the messages to be delivered at a public lecture and discussion taking place Friday evening at McMaster University's David Braley Centre.

The event is part of Brain Smart Hamilton's Let's Play Safely project, which is a collaboration between McMaster, the City of Hamilton and some minor sports organizations.

Concussions can have a substantial impact on children's lives, said Carol DeMatteo, a professor in McMaster's School of Rehabilitation Science and an occupational therapist who works with concussion patients.

"We can probably prevent those long-term effects if we manage it properly at the outset," said DeMatteo.

DeMatteo will be the moderator for the dialogue.

The discussion series is trying to create awareness about concussion diagnosis and management, sport safety, treatment options and successfully returning to a normal life after a concussion.

The main goal of the project is to implement and evaluate a concussion education strategy throughout minor sports in Hamilton.

"We don't want to scare people off sports," said DeMatteo.

"We still want kids to participate, but safely."

The keynote speakers Friday will be McMaster's John Connolly and Mike Noseworthy, two members of the research team for The Spectator's recent four-part concussion series called Collision Course.

The groundbreaking project, which took more than two years to complete, used sophisticated brain imaging techniques to test nearly two dozen retired CFL football players and study the long-term impacts of concussions.

The disturbing findings showed that the results from some players were no different than the results that would be seen in coma patients.

Brain images from some retired players in their 40s looked like the images of men in their 80s.

On average, the retired players showed a significant loss of nerve cells in crucial areas of the brain and a startling decrease in the brain's electrical activity.

Connolly is an expert in the analysis of concussion-related EEG brain recordings and Noseworthy is renowned for his brain-imaging work with MRIs.

The pair, along with DeMatero, has been involved in a long-term concussion research project involving children.

There will also be an experts' panel followed by an open discussion.

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