

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
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October 20, 2016

Editor, The New York Times
620 Eighth Avenue
New York, NY 10018

Dear Editor:

The Oct. 16, 2016, editorial, "Head Trauma Haunts the Gridiron," leads readers to believe there is a concussion epidemic. While the annual number of reported sports-related concussions has increased, this is due to greater awareness, education, concussion safety laws and changing definitions. It is simply not accurate to suggest that sports-related brain trauma is more of a problem now than in the past.

Neurosurgeons agree that concussion education for everyone involved with youth sports is essential. However, a narrative that implies sports-related concussion is a "crisis" interjects a new fear that athletes and their parents must consider when deciding to participate. This is misleading and a disservice to your readers if it dissuades youth participation in contact sports. As physicians, we want young people to be safe, but we also must encourage them to be active if they are to enjoy a lifetime of good health. Because factors that may contribute to neural degeneration or predispose some people to prolonged clinical effects of concussion remain unknown, it is irresponsible to draw conclusions about the cause and effect of concussions and neurodegenerative disease before the research is done.

Fear based on what we have yet to understand should not be a compelling reason to abandon sports that have had an overall benefit on public health.

Sincerely,



Frederick A. Boop, MD, President
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