

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
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March 30, 2016

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

Dear Editor:

The March 27, 2016 article by Benedict Carey, "On C.T.E. and Athletes, Science Remains in Its Infancy," correctly points out that much of the science on chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) is unsettled, and the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) agree that CTE research is in its infancy and continues to evolve.

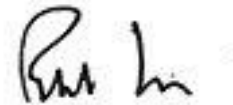
Unfortunately, instead of a measured and reasonable analysis of the relative risks and benefits of participating in contact sports, the prevailing narrative in the media has produced the perception that sports-related concussion is a "crisis" affecting American youth. This perception is inaccurate and potentially dangerous, particularly if it limits opportunities for vigorous exercise and sports, a loss which will contribute to a real youth health crisis — childhood obesity. We believe that exercise through sports is one of the best forms of medicine and neurosurgeons have worked to help make sports safer through education, advocacy and legislation.

Neurosurgeons have also long been involved in the diagnosis and care of individuals with sports-related injuries. We have made a significant contribution to clinical and basic science research on the subject and have shaped current guidelines for evaluation and treatment. CTE is a real pathological entity, but likely a rare clinical phenomenon; the actual incidence and prevalence of clinical or pathological CTE has yet to be elucidated in sports or other traumatic brain injury-related activities. Many variables occurring over a lifetime may contribute and advanced research needs to be done with very carefully designed prospective databases and longitudinal studies over an extended period to better understand this disease.

Sincerely,



H. Hunt Batjer, MD, President
American Association of Neurological Surgeons



Russell R. Lonser, President
Congress of Neurological Surgeons



Shelly D. Timmons, MD, PhD, past chair
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