MOVING CONCUSSION RESEARCH FORWARD IN NEBRASKA AND NATIONALLY

Featuring Dr. Arthur Maerlender
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Center for Brain, Biology and Behavior

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ABSTRACT

The importance of understanding concussion is twofold: first, concussion in sports and mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) in general are issues of public health concern due to the sheer number of injuries. Research has demonstrated several facts that highlight the need for this avenue of study. Second, based on Jeffrey Barth’s idea in the 1980’s, sports provides a laboratory for studying concussions as a proxy for mTBI: sport provides a more controlled environment for obtaining information, including baseline assessment. At the same time, mTBI is a mild injury that has generated public interest and some level of hysteria. Sorting out the ‘signal’ from the ‘noise’ has become an important function of research.

There is general consensus on the direction and needs for concussion research. The Institute of Medicine Study in 2013 laid out the outlines and NIH has reinforced this agenda. At the Center for Brain, Biology and Behavior (CB3), and now throughout the UN system, there multiple efforts to study TBI underway. From a research perspective, a rate-limiting factor is obtaining enough cases to power studies. Coordinating research with serious athletic performers and programs is also a challenge. Thus collaborations are crucial.

This discussion will focus on the research agenda at CB3 as it relates to national priorities, some results, ongoing projects, and future projects, with an eye towards developing collaborative relationships.

ABOUT DR. MAERLENDER

As the Director of Clinical Research at CB3 he is focused on improving the system of care for TBI both at UNL and in the state, while conducting research into the identification and treatment of sports-related concussions and mild TBI. In addition to conducting research studies in sport-related concussion, he directs the Concussion Assessment Program that is responsible for neuropsychological testing of varsity and club-sport athletes at UNL.