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Press Release

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CDC Announces Updated Information to help Physicians Recognize and Manage Concussions Early

Multimedia tool kit adds patient evaluation tool to improve early diagnosis

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is announcing a revision to the multimedia educational physicians' tool kit to help provide earlier diagnosis, management and appropriate referral for patients with concussions. One of the key components in the revised kit is the Acute Concussion Evaluation (ACE) assessment tool which can help physicians with their initial evaluation and diagnosis for patients of all ages with a known or suspected concussion.

Concussions or mild traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) are caused by a bump or blow to the head that disrupts the way the brain normally works. In the United States, at least 1.4 million people die or are treated in a hospital or emergency department with a TBI each year. Of those, 75 to 90 percent are categorized as mild TBIs.

Many concussions are not treated and CDC experts estimate that 1.6 to 3.8 million sports and recreation-related TBIs occur each year in the U.S.

"Recent research has shown that diagnosing mild TBIs as soon as possible is critically important because without proper management, recovery can take longer, and people who are still recovering are at higher risk of having a second, more serious injury. We believe that the ACE assessment tool will provide a needed diagnostic tool for physicians because it provides the most up-to-date information on how to recognize and treat concussion" said Dr. Jean Langlois, one of CDC's leading TBI researchers and one of the authors of the tool kit.

Working with CDC staff, researchers at Children's National Medical Center and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center developed the ACE assessment to guide physicians through an evaluation of characteristics of the injury, symptoms and risk factors.

According to Langlois, "Another unique and very important component of the tool kit is the ACE Care Plan which we believe can help physicians to devise a course of action for their patients to prevent re-injury and to aid in their recovery."

The tool kit also contains practical, easy-to-use clinical information and tools:

- The "Facts for Physicians" booklet
- Fact Sheets in English and Spanish on preventing concussion
- A palm card for on-field management of sports-related concussion
- CD-ROM with downloadable kit materials and additional TBI resources

"Concussions can happen to anyone and sometimes it's difficult to know if someone's actually been hurt. But this public health issue has far reaching consequences that impact not just the daily lives of those injured, but also their families and their overall quality of life," said CDC Injury Center director Dr. Ileana Arias. "This revised tool kit for physicians represents the combined efforts of many scientists, researchers and others throughout the U.S. We believe this new information will be of great value to healthcare providers and their patients."

The "Heads Up: Brain Injury in Your Practice" tool kit can be ordered and downloaded free-of-charge online at: www.cdc.gov/injury. For more information about concussions, traumatic brain injury, or injury in general, visit the CDC Injury Center's website at www.cdc.gov/injury.

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