The Psychological Undertones for Delayed and Non-Treatment Seeking Behavior After Concussion

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The Psychological Undertones for Delayed or Non-Treatment Seeking Behaviors After Concussion

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Abstract/Purpose

The goal of this project was to gain a general understanding for why individuals don’t seek or delay seeking help after sustaining a concussion. We believe that this project is important for helping us to identify why people don’t seek treatment while shedding a light on the dark figure that exists within mental health and sports culture. We hold that the data gathered from this project will allow us to empathize and help reeducate individuals by addressing existing stigma around concussions.

Background

In the United States, over 750,000 head injuries each year result in hospitalization (Barrer & Ruben, 1984) and one such injury occurs every 16 seconds (Swircreakey, Price, & Lead, 1993). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that approximately 300,000 sports related concussions occur annually in the United States (McCrea, Hammers, Olsen, Leo, & Guskiewicz, 2004). Concussion has gained ground as a pronounced health problem and substantial research has been dedicated to comprehending its effects. As a result, public understanding has considerably increased in recent years. Despite increased awareness, research suggests underreporting of concussion symptoms is still widespread (Asken, McCrea, Clugston, Snyder, Houck, & Bauer, 2016). While the effects of concussion are not usually immediately life threatening, research has shown the impact caused by recovery can have a detrimental impact on a person’s quality of life. Under-reporting may lead to an increased risk of future injuries and improper management of injury (Register-Mihalik, 2010).

Methods

Participants consisted of 84 students (74.7% female, 24.1% male) recruited from the University of Montana by the way of the online SONA Psychology Research system. Eligibility requirements limited participation to individuals at least 18 years old and those who sustained a concussion (any minor to major bump, blow, or jolt to the head or by the body) within the last 4 years. All participants meeting the requirements were directed to Qualtrics and asked to complete a self-report, anonymous questionnaire about the nature of their concussion and whether they sought professional medical treatment. In addition, participants were asked questions regarding their personal backgrounds and attitudes/beliefs about their concussion.

Findings/Conclusions

Results from the self-report survey revealed three notable trends. Most participant answers revealed that accidents were the most predominant cause of injury, closely followed by school sports. This result differed slightly from our initial hypothesis which placed school sports as the most prevalent cause of injury. Answers for the question on how long after the injury took place did the participants seek professional medical care revealed that the bulk of participants delayed seeking care for an extend period after the initial injury. This offers evidence in support of earlier research which posed that individuals who suffer concussions delay seeking professional help for long periods of time after the injury occurred.

Why Delay Seeking Professional Medical Treatment

Most importantly, participant responses indicated that the reason for delaying or not seeking treatment has to do with the idea that they feel the injury is not serious enough to seek professional medical care. The data offers support to the notion that concussions continue to remain underreported despite an increase in public awareness.

Results

Findings/Conclusions

Activity Being Participate In At Time Of Injury

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Being Participate In At Time Of Injury</th>
<th>42%</th>
<th>12%</th>
<th>13%</th>
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<td>Community Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>Club/League Sport</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Sport</td>
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References