

Ultimately, “Concussion” Movie Honors Dr. Omalu’s Science, Human Will

David Jahr September 03, 2015



Dr. Harry Kerasidis says science and human will are the heroes in the new "Concussion" movie, due December 2015.

Controversy surrounds the new film featuring actor Will Smith, but let's not lose sight of the real hero, or get too alarmed about CTE, says neurologist Harry Kerasidis, MD

([Newswire.net](#) -- September 3, 2015) National Harbor, Maryland --As the media wrestles with the Roger Goodell and NFL - [Sony Pictures Entertainment manipulation](#) of the “Concussion” movie — featuring one of my favorite actors Will Smith — I hope people remember to honor the science and Dr. Bennet Omalu’s dedication and perseverance to bringing his discovery of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) to the medical community, and now the world.

It’s *science* that caused this rift, and Dr. Omalu’s human *will* that deserves the Academy Award. Although I’m also rooting for Will Smith to walk away with an Oscar, Dr. Omalu had to endure extremely difficult challenges standing for the truth.

The truth is, CTE is real. Dr. Omalu is credited with describing CTE in 2002 in football great Mike Webster, and reported [in this GQ article](#). Continued investigations on deceased NFL brains led by Sports Legacy Institute and Dr. Ann McKay from Harvard found 76 of 79 brains studied had signs of CTE.

Although the preliminary research is alarming, we do not know the actual incidence rates of CTE. I hope to enjoy the movie, but hope it does not overly sensationalize the disease. The value of sport certainly outweighs the risks, based on what we know now.

Before we all pick up our balls and go home, more research needs to clarify the true extent and risk associated with CTE. Science is the key to CTE.

What is CTE?

Sustaining repetitive hits cumulatively may lead to CTE, which is a progressive degenerative disease of the brain found in athletes with a history of repetitive brain trauma, including symptomatic concussions as well as asymptomatic sub-concussive hits to the head.

Dr. Omalu’s work revealed CTE is associated with a build-up of Tau protein, similar to the pathology seen in Alzheimer’s Disease. This may help researchers understand how to treat CTE. But it’s important to note that CTE is uniquely different from Alzheimer’s. They are unique diseases with distinctly different pathologies.

Perhaps, one of the most important goals I have for my new book coming out soon, **“Concussionology: Redefining Sports Concussion Management For All Levels,”** is to help increase awareness of CTE and improve concussion detection and care of athletes so we can all enjoy the benefits of sports.

In my book, I also share signs that re-building the brain from damage caused by concussions, including post concussion syndrome, is possible — which should be welcome news for all NFL players.

But, concussions and CTE do not discriminate. It's not just a professional football players' problem.

Look around you. Notice any odd behaviors among your friends and family, like depression, memory loss, sleep problems, and anger outbursts? These symptoms often mimic other conditions, so it's important to rule out concussions and traumatic brain injury first. If we know it's the brain's biological function causing the emotional issues, we can direct treatment to the damaged brain, while enhancing the brain health with lifestyle changes.

I admire Dr. Omalu, because like him, science is my life. Concussions are my focus. Thanks to his pure will, I believe positive changes are in the forecast.

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Harry Kerasidis, M.D. is the founder and medical director for the sports concussion management platform XLNTbrain, LLC, based in Maryland. He is also the founder of Chesapeake Neurology Associates in Prince Frederick, Maryland and serves as the Medical Director for the *Center for Neuroscience, Sleep Disorders Center and Stroke Center* at Calvert Memorial Hospital. His new book, "*Concussionology: Redefining Sports Concussion Management*" comes out later this month. [Details available by signing up here](#) .

XLNTbrain LLC

137 National Plaza

Suite 300

National Harbor, Maryland 20754

United States

(703) 657-1857

info@xlntbrain.com

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