SPORTS-RELATED CONCUSSIONS IN AMERICA’S TEEN ATHLETES GET PRIORITY ATTENTION AT AMERICAN HEADACHE SOCIETY’S ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETING

Migraine Specialists Seek to Reduce Injuries and Encourage Parents and Schools to Take a Major Role in Prevention

LOS ANGELES (June 20, 2012) – With a dramatic rise in the incidence of sports-related concussion, or traumatic brain injury (TBI), in teens and a 62% increase in the number of emergency room admissions for teen brain injury within the last decade, the nation’s top migraine specialists are taking a deeper look at this vulnerable population in a special session at this year’s Scientific Meeting of the American Headache Society, June 21-24.

“The rising incidence of these injuries, which may have serious long-term consequences for many young people, is a public health problem of epidemic proportion,” Elizabeth Loder, president of the American Headache Society, said. “High school athletic departments are developing programs to minimize the risks but much more is needed to prevent, recognize and manage concussions. Many concussions still go unrecognized, and many young athletes ‘play through’ the symptoms. This increases the risk of repetitive concussions that take longer to recover, and symptoms that may last months to years. Concussions are brain injuries that can cause severe and persistent migraine headaches, sleep disturbances, depression, anxiety, memory and learning impairment, and even degenerative brain diseases later in life.”

The symposium, on June 23, will cover “Epidemiology of Concussion and Post-Concussion Headaches in Pediatrics,” “Neuropsychological and School Issues following Concussion,” and include world-renown experts on the subject including Heidi Blume, MD of the Seattle Children’s Hospital; Jason Lerner, MD of the UCLA Heath System; Scott Powers, PhD of the Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center; and A. David Rothner, MD of the Cleveland Clinic.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, almost half a million (473,947) emergency department visits for TBI are made annually by children aged 0 to 14 years and more than 135,000 young people each year experience a sport-related concussion. Among 15-24 year olds, sports are second only to motor vehicle accidents as the leading cause of concussion. Activities associated with TBI-related emergency room visits include bicycling, football, playground activities, basketball, and soccer.

“Despite the increased awareness and recognition, concussion is still under-recognized, under-reported, and suboptimally managed,” said Dr. Loder. “Research is still desperately needed to better define those who are at highest risk of repeated concussions.”
and long-term neurological impairment. Because headache in general and migraine in particular is the most common symptom of concussion, neurologists and migraine specialists will be increasingly called upon to make diagnostic, prognostic, treatment, and return-to-activity decisions for these young athletes.”

Dr. Loder noted that many states have passed legislation requiring mandatory education for athletes, parents, coaches and athletic directors and trainers. In addition, the law in many states requires concussed athletes be cleared by a licensed health care provider before being eligible to return-to-play. Many high schools are instituting concussion recognition and prevention programs and are taking steps toward better protection of young athletes involved in contact sports. “Many high school coaches, athletic directors, athletic trainers have instituted a sports injury policy which prevents injured kids from returning to play after a head blow,” she said.

“ Teens who experience blows to the head can have both immediate and long-term impairment,” said Heidi Blume, MD, MPH, from Seattle Children’s Research Institute who has published extensively on the topic and is session chair. “What parents need to know is that some children with traumatic brain injury (TBI) may have headaches for several weeks or months after TBI, but that most recover with time,” she said. “And significantly, girls and teenagers appear to be at particular risk for headaches after mild TBI. Parents should be aware of what to expect after mild TBI, which may come from a sports-related injury.”

Other session panelist include Jason Lerner, MD, a pediatric neurologist at UCLA; Scott Powers, PhD, Director, Center for Child Behavior and Nutrition Research and Training at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital; and A. David Rothner, MD, Chairman Emeritus of the Section of Child Neurology and Director of the Pediatric/Adolescent Headache Program at Cleveland Clinic.

For the full meeting schedule, click here: http://www.americanheadachesociety.org/assets/1/7/Annual_Reg_Brochure_Final.pdf

Migraine is one of the most ancient and mysterious of diseases with many myths and folklores attached to its diagnosis and treatment. Over the last 5,000 years, migraine sufferers subjected themselves to an array of extreme and bizarre treatments to find relief, Dr. Loder noted. These have included drilling a hole in the skull to let out the “bad humours,” bloodletting, sorcery, binding a clay crocodile to the head, and inserting the bones of a vulture into the nose.

Some 36 million Americans suffer from migraine, more than have asthma or diabetes combined. More than 6 million American suffer from chronic migraine, a highly disabling neurological disorder Migraine can be extremely disabling and costly, accounting for more than $20 billion in direct (e.g. doctor visits, medications) and indirect (e.g. missed work, lost productivity) expenses each year in the United States.

The American Headache Society (AHS) is a professional society of health care providers dedicated to the study and treatment of headache and face pain. The Society’s objectives are to
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promote the exchange of information and ideas concerning the causes and treatments of headache and related painful disorders. Educating physicians, health professionals and the public and encouraging scientific research are the primary functions of this organization. AHS activities include an annual scientific meeting, a comprehensive headache symposium, regional symposia for neurologists and family practice physicians, publication of the journal Headache and sponsorship of the AHS Committee for Headache Education (ACHE). www.americanheadachesociety.org

ABOUT THE AMERICAN MIGRAINE FOUNDATION

The American Migraine Foundation is a non-profit foundation supported by the American Headache Society and generous donors dedicated to the advancement of migraine research. The mission of this newly formed foundation is to support innovative research that will lead to improvement in the lives of those who suffer from migraine and other disabling headaches. (www.americanmigrainefoundation.org

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