

# CONCUSSION AND HEAD INJURIES IN PROFESSIONAL BOXING AND COMBAT SPORTS

Multiple concussions are considered a significant risk factor for cognitive impairment and mental health problems.

In the interests of the safety and wellbeing of Victorian professional boxing and combat sports participants, the Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Board (Board) has prepared this brief newsletter to:

- remind all participants of the current concussion rules and guidelines
- provide an update on the Board's concussion related enquires and review efforts
- deliver some general background information on chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE).

## Concussion guidelines and rules

The Board has a role in considering matters of health, safety and fitness, primarily in the context of its management of contestant registration.

The Board's current rules incorporate concussion related non-fight periods, return to contest requirements and concussion management guidelines.

Participants with a diagnosed concussion are expected to follow the concussion guidelines set out in the rules and the medical advice of their health care professional.

The Board also encourages all contestants to familiarise themselves with concussion related health risks.

The Board's concussion management guidelines reflect the concussion consensus statement published in 2018 by the Association of Ringside Physicians.

A copy of the statement is available from the British Journal of Sports Medicine at: <https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/53/6/328>.

For more general concussion in sport information and resources, please visit the Concussion in Sport Australia website at: <https://www.concussioninsport.gov.au/home>

## Review of concussion related rules and guidelines

The Board, with the support of the Combat Sports Unit, has commissioned a review of boxing and combat sport related concussion rules and management practices.

The review is being led by Sports Medicine Australia (SMA) and is supported by a panel of experts, which includes ringside doctors.

SMA recently sought nominations from contestants, trainers and referees to participate in a concussion review focus group.

Should you be interested in contributing to this important review, please email Caitlin at SMA [caitlin.ficken@sma.org.au](mailto:caitlin.ficken@sma.org.au) by 28 July 2021, and provide your name, best contact number and industry role (trainer, athlete, or referee) in your message.

## Chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE)

CTE is a brain disease that can only be diagnosed after death.

Currently, researchers do not know how common CTE is or how to diagnose it during life.

Research relies on the examination of the brains of deceased Australian athletes, with and without a history of concussion or other traumatic brain injuries.

The Board recently met with two experts on CTE:

- Associate Professor Michael Buckland, the Founding and Executive Director of the Australian Sports Brain Bank; and
- Associate Professor Alan Pearce, the Australian Sports Brain Bank's Research Manager.

It is still not clear how concussions and repetitive sub-concussive hits may contribute to CTE risk and severity, how quickly CTE may develop and how it affects the brain.

Associate Professor Buckland suggests that, for the time being, the **US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention fact sheet** may provide a useful summary of what researchers currently know and don't know about CTE (as at January 2019).

(Note: An annotated copy of the above mentioned CDC factsheet was also attached to this email and contains some suggested local support links for your further information.)

## The Australian Sports Brain Bank

The Australian Sports Brain Bank was established in 2018 by the Neuropathology Department at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Sydney, in partnership with the Brain and Mind Centre at the University of Sydney and the Concussion Legacy Foundation in the USA.

The donation of brains after death to the Australian Sports Brain Bank will support CTE research.

If you would like more information please visit the Australian Sports Brain Bank's website at: <https://www.brainbank.org.au/>

**Please note:** The information and/or external links to information provided in this email is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice and should not be relied on as health or personal advice. Always seek the guidance of your doctor or other qualified health professional with any questions you may have regarding your health or a medical condition.