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## Women at higher risk for concussions

**By: Michelle Pineiro**

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Females run a higher risk of suffering concussions than their male counterparts who engage in the same sports, according to recently published university research.

The ongoing study, which is taking place at Ohio State's Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital, is the first to compare concussion rates between genders in collegiate sports. It is also the first study in more than a decade to look into national sports injury trends, said Dawn Comstock, assistant professor at the College of Medicine at OSU.

The research focuses on football, men's and women's soccer, women's volleyball, men's and women's basketball, men's wrestling, men's baseball, and women's softball. Researchers at OSU study only these sports due to "financial constraints," Comstock said. However, there are plans in the future to expand the research to include other sports.

Comstock's research found that basketball and soccer in particular showed the highest distinction between men and women experiencing concussions.

Hannah Pechan, a senior in international studies, who has endured nine soccer and basketball-related concussions while at college, said she is thrilled someone is looking into this.

"In almost all of my doctor's appointments, even with the neurologist, the doctors finally admitted how little modern science knows (about concussions)," Pechan said.

Comstock said she attributes the higher risk females face of experiencing a concussion to physiological differences.

"Males generally have stronger neck muscles than females. The muscles act as shock absorbers protecting them from injury," Comstock said.

She also cites potential societal and cultural reasons for the high numbers.

"It may also just be that girls are more likely to report symptoms of a concussion," Comstock said. "Girls are more protected by society than males, who are taught to be tough and ignore pain."

These factors make the study even more complex as researches can only work with cases reported to

them by athletic trainers, Comstock said.

The data used for the study comes from an Internet-based collection tool that accumulates injury information from athletes in collegiate sports.

This is gathered from reports provided by certified NCAA athletic trainers around the nation who fill out detailed injury report forms.

The forms ask the athlete's weight, height, the severity of the injury, whether the athlete needed surgery, what they were doing that caused the injury, whether they played on artificial grass and other such detailed information, Comstock said.

Once the data is collected, Comstock and her colleagues identify trends and learn injury patterns.

"The value of this research is that it allows us to do injury surveillance, which can then help us look closer into other trends, which is how we found that there are an increased number of females suffering from concussions," Comstock said. "We don't want this to scare people, we just want students to be able to practice sports as safely as possible," she said.

*Michelle Pineiro can be reached at [pineiro.3@osu.edu](mailto:pineiro.3@osu.edu).*

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