

Soccer players more at risk of dementia

24th October, 2019



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Researchers from a university in the UK have found that playing soccer can damage the mental health of players. A team of experts from Glasgow University discovered that former professional football players are three and a half times more likely to die of dementia than other people. The experts looked at whether or not heading a football could lead to brain damage. The research team looked into the deaths of 7,676 ex-soccer players who played in Scotland professionally between 1900 and 1976. The team compared the deaths of the former soccer players to the deaths of 23,000 people who did not regularly play football. They found that the football players suffered from a lot more brain injuries.

The research was requested by the Football Association and the Professional Footballers' Association in the UK. The two associations made the request after the death of English football player Jeff Astle in 2002. Mr Astle's family was convinced he died as a result of playing football. Doctors said his cause of death was "repeated minor brain traumas". The doctors said this could happen with heading a soccer ball. Researcher Dr Willie Stewart said his research showed that former football players were more likely to suffer from Alzheimer's disease, motor neurone disease and Parkinson's disease. He said they were less likely to die of common diseases, such as heart disease and lung cancer.

Sources: bbc.com / independent.co.uk / telegraph.co.uk

Writing

Soccer is the best game in the world. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

researchers / university / damage / mental health / experts / soccer / regularly / brain / professional / request / result / trauma / heading / ball / suffer / disease / lung cancer

True / False

- The research is from the United Kingdom. T / F
- The researchers looked at soccer players who are currently playing. T / F
- The researchers looked at the deaths of 23,000 ex-soccer players. T / F
- The researchers looked at some players who played from 1900. T / F
- The research was requested by two football associations. T / F
- The family of a player who died is sure heading a ball caused his death. T / F
- Soccer players are less likely to suffer from diseases like Alzheimer's. T / F
- Soccer players are less likely to die from lung cancer. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. found | a. ex- |
| 2. damage | b. probable |
| 3. experts | c. frequently |
| 4. likely | d. harm |
| 5. regularly | e. small |
| 6. requested | f. like |
| 7. convinced | g. asked for |
| 8. minor | h. discovered |
| 9. former | i. certain |
| 10. such as | j. specialists |

Discussion – Student A

- What do you think of soccer?
- Do you think heading the ball causes brain injuries?
- What other sports cause brain injuries?
- Should soccer players wear head guards?
- Should soccer players be able to sue for damages?
- What do you know about dementia?
- How does your country treat mental health?
- Do you worry about your mental health?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. soccer can damage the mental | a. likely to die |
| 2. former professional | b. diseases |
| 3. three and a half times more | c. the request |
| 4. heading a | d. football players |
| 5. suffered from a lot | e. to suffer |
| 6. two associations made | f. health of players |
| 7. convinced he died as a result | g. lung cancer |
| 8. football players were more likely | h. of playing football |
| 9. die of common | i. more brain injuries |
| 10. heart disease and | j. football |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- Is soccer the world's greatest game?
- Which word is better - 'soccer' or 'football'?
- How would you deal with mental health problems?
- What advice do you have for soccer players?
- How can we end mental health diseases?
- Is it better to play soccer than to not play?
- What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Spelling

- A team of xrespet
- srasnoeifplo football players
- more ylkile to die of dementia
- The team dracompe the deaths
- graluyrel play football
- a lot more brain erinusij
- The two associations made the rueqets
- Mr Astle's family was cdivnenoc
- repeated morni brain traumas
- ufrsef from Alzheimer's
- heart aesdsie
- lung rcenac

Answers – Synonym Match

| | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. h | 2. d | 3. j | 4. b | 5. c |
| 6. g | 7. i | 8. e | 9. a | 10. f |

Role Play

Role A – Exercise

You think exercise is the best thing to slow down dementia. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as good. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): working, friends or hobbies.

Role B – Working

You think working is the best thing to slow down dementia. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as good. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): exercise, friends or hobbies.

Role C – Friends

You think friends are the best thing to slow down dementia. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as good. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): working, exercise or hobbies.

Role D – Hobbies

You think hobbies are the best thing to slow down dementia. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as good. Also, tell the others which is the least effective of these (and why): working, friends or exercise.

Speaking – Dementia

Rank these with your partner. Put the best things to slow down dementia at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| • Friends | • Exercise |
| • Medicine | • Diet |
| • Sleep | • Working |
| • Hobbies | • Reading |

Answers – True False

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a | T | b | F | c | F | d | T | e | T | f | T | g | F | h | T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.