Today’s piece was prepared by Alex Murray, MD, based on a USA Today story [Concussions and contact sports: What these parents learned from their son’s death](https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/2019/12/04/football-what-these-parents-learned-their-sons-death/4300688002/)

Much of the reporting on the role of head trauma in youth sports has centered around the tension between the cultural importance of certain contact sports and the risk of irreversible injury and significant impact on mental health. This recent report in USA Today shares the story of Matt, a young man who participated in a variety of contact sports (hockey, football) in high school and college and sustained many traumatic head injuries along the way. He was a multi-sports star and often referred to as a “golden child” by others. At the same time, Matt began experiencing depressive episodes and suicidality, in addition to a notable shift in his behavior according to his family. He became more withdrawn and tense. Ultimately six years after the emergence of these symptoms, he took his life. His parents are eager to know if he experienced chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) that led him to struggle with depression, but an autopsy is not able to be performed.

The development of CTE may be multi-factorial with trauma, genetics and drugs all potentially implicated. The article goes on to discuss the disagreement between sports federations, which released a consensus statement downplaying the association between head trauma in sport and CTE, and the medical community. A neurology researcher likens the public health impact of the medical risks of concussive injury to the dangers of tobacco and cigarette smoking. While certain sports leagues say that they have made changes to make play safer, enrollment in youth football has declined, likely due to greater public awareness of the risks of head injury.

This article summarizes the human impact of brain trauma in a way that is responsible and faithful to the objective research that has been done in this field.

**RESOURCES ON TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY FOR CLINICIANS, FAMILIES, & PATIENTS:**

[Project LEARNet](http://www.projectlearnet.org/) *A Resource for Teachers, Clinicians, Parents, and Students by the Brain Injury*

*Association of New York State*

[HEADS UP](https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/resources/index.html) *CDC Resource Center*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!