

Need for Support Groups for Caregivers for CTE

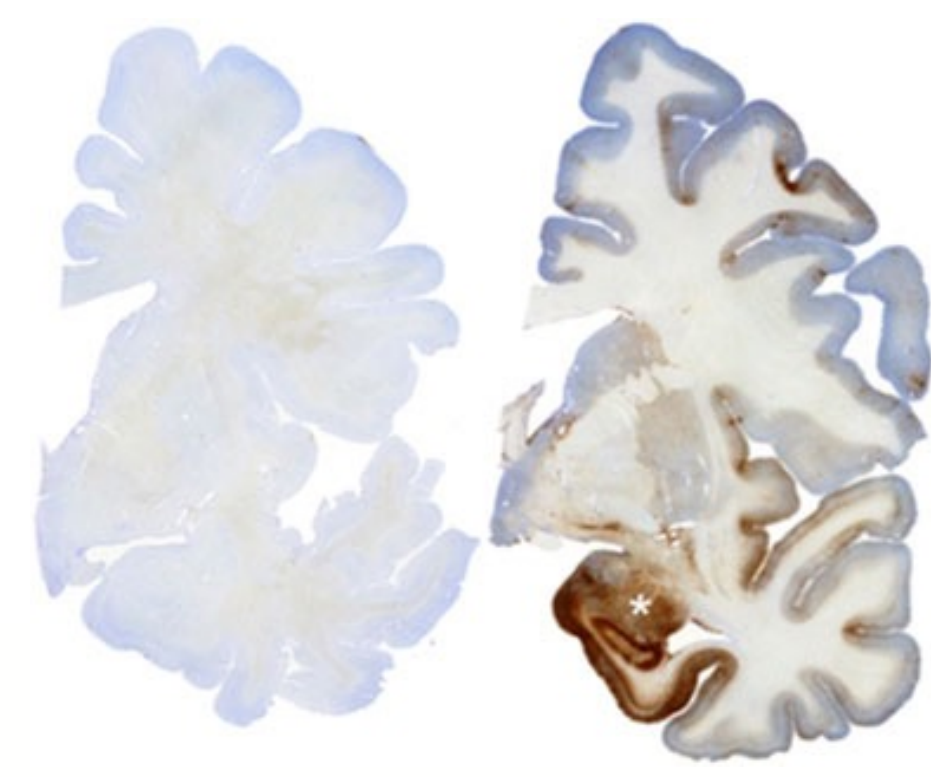
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ABSTRACT

As the population of professional athletes continues to increase, the risk of developing some form of neurological problem increases. Athletes who have been involved with high impact contact sports are at the highest risk for developing such problems. It has been found that support groups for caregivers are very effective and can help educate and relieve some of the added stress that it is put onto the caregivers. As of right now, there are no support groups for caregivers of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE). Many times the caregiver becomes the patient due to some other condition and hopefully with this new type of support group, the caregiver will gain knowledge and understanding of how to care for their loved one.

Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy

Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) is caused by repetitive trauma to the brain including both concussive and subconcussive injuries. Most of the patients who have been found to have this are professional football players in the NFL. It has been found that that death due to a neurological problem is three times higher for NFL players compared to the general US population. CTE is thought to result in executive dysfunction, memory impairment, depression and suicidality, apathy, poor impulse control and eventually dementia. The risk factors are still unknown, as is many of the factors of this disease. As of now, CTE has only been able to be diagnosed by an autopsy that is performed after death, but there are various studies working on being able to diagnose prior to death. There is a great need for further research on this disorder. Many people that are suffering from the consequences of a concussion do not have the proper education or resources to have a proper recovery and reduce the signs and symptoms.



CASE DESCRIPTION

The need for caregivers in this area of study is imperative. There are various focus groups for dementia, Alzheimer's disease, PTSD, and various cancers. There is a lack of support groups for caregivers of people with CTE which is something that has grown in cases in the last decade.

Executive Summary

This program is in the form of a support group. The group would meet 6-8 weeks. This support group will be in the form of both an educational meeting and support. There will be some sessions that are strictly educational about the disorder and what to expect. Other times there will be open discussion or meeting with health professionals who have a better understanding on the disorder. Depending on the success, the group could go on for longer or form into a new session. The support group would meet in the Findlay area either at the university, George House, or some other common place. Possible funding can come from grants or from possible partners from Blanchard Valley hospital, the university, and community partners. There will be a follow up program after the initial 6-8 weeks to see how the caregiver burden has decreased or to see if the caregiver feels more educated and prepared to take care of their loved one better.

Meeting Layout

Week 1: Educational

- Group welcome and introductions
- Completion of the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI)
- Brief description of CTE and the programmed weeks to follow

Week 2: Speaker

- A neuroscientist will come in to discuss what is really going on with the patients brain and what may be to expected to occur
- A presentation of pictures and handouts for description will be provided

Week 3: Educational/ Discussion

- Focused meeting on stress, handling appointments, and managing time
- Group discussion
 - Spending time on each topic
- Opportunity to share current and previous experiences

Week 4: Speaker

- A Physical therapist and Occupational therapist will come in to explain different activities and exercises that may be beneficial to do throughout the day to aid and help with activities of daily living that may begin to worsen with the disorder.
 - ❖ The patients are encouraged to also attend this session to support the caregiver and also benefit from hearing the suggestions.

Week 5: Speaker

- Other various specialists welcome to come and share
 - Gerontologist, nurses, psychologists
- More of a discussion based meeting with various health professionals to lead discussion and answer questions

Week 6: Closing

- Caregivers will be asked to share their experiences and what they have learned over the last 6 weeks
- A post-test of the BSI to compare the stress of the caregiver after completion

CONCLUSIONS

This is a new proposal for a support group. This proposal could be taken and formed into any community where the population is in need for such a group. It is important to not only look at and help the patients that are suffering, but it is just as important to care for the caregivers, the people who are behind the scenes helping make life more comfortable for those who are struggling with the disorder.

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