Junior Seau was a professional linebacker in the National Football League (NFL) who played for the San Diego Chargers and seemed to have it all. That is until he began to withdraw from his family and friends. Seau made numerous terrible business decisions. He abused pills, drank and gambled away terrifying sums. It was evident to those who knew him well that he was struggling, but no one foresaw his suicide on the morning of May 2, 2012.

Even though concussions and big hits are part of the game, I believe there are ways to prevent further disease and even death. From medical trainers to more protective helmets there can be countless ways the NFL can make the game safer, they just have to do it.

"There have been many NFL players who have committed suicide or died from a head disease, – including Terry Long of the Pittsburgh Steelers, Andre Waters of the Philadelphia Eagles, Dave Duerson of the Chicago Bears and Chris Henry of the Cincinnati Bengals"(Crees). Any time someone takes their own life away it's tragic. These players above all died from disease that a concussion gave them. It does not matter if it is a minor concussion or a big hit during the game either one can turn as bad. But it can be controlled or even stopped.

When a player gets tackled, you hope he is he going to be okay. But once you see that player back in the game you just ask yourself, how? How is he back in the game? The trainer that sent the player back onto the field should be held accountable along with the player himself. Both know that brain disease can happen after concussions. If the player is honest and tells the coach I'm not feeling well or needs rest, this problem could be avoided.

According to Sean Gagnier each year, researchers at Virginia Tech University and Wake Forest University work together to test the newest helmets. They test the helmet’s ability to sustain impact and reduce concussions. In 2011, there was only one helmet that received a five-star rating from the Virginia Tech study, it was the Riddell Revo Speed helmet. The 2012 tests saw two more helmets added to the five-star rating, the new Riddell 360 and Rawlings Quantum Plus (Gagnier). This is a very good way to make the NFL much safer. If all of the NFL helmets used were five-star rated, I think there would be less concussions and provide more protection for the players. The problem is NFL players get to choose the style of helmets and the facemask designs they wear. The player and/or the team may have contracts with different helmet manufactures which may force the player to wear an inferior piece of equipment.

Concussions Turning Into Further Disease

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For players that are old and out of the limelight, Dr. Kevin Crutchfield has some ideas. “Retired players need to have periodic psychological assessment because they do get depressed.” I agree with Dr. Kevin Crutchfield 100%. When a player retires from the NFL, their life can suddenly become empty. Football is everything to them and yes, they might have money but money can’t fix everyone’s problems. From all the blows to the head and injuries they might have suffered disease may not be too far behind. A way that this could all be cured is consistent check-ins with a psychologist. If you have a heart problem or a broken bone you usually have follow up appointments after the initial one. For example, a NFL player receives a big hit to the head. He sees the doctor and the doctor clears the player to play. That player usually never goes back to see the doctor and he continues to play the game. If more players went for follow up appointments, they would be less vulnerable to a disease such as CTE.

CTE is a progressive degenerative disease that is caused by repeated head injuries. People with CTE may have symptoms such as dementia, headaches, tremors, confusion, aggression and depression. These diseases can happen just from one big hit to the head during a game. At the time you don’t realize but as you age, you can start to feel these symptoms more and more. When you’re young and you take a hit to the head, you usually shake it off and continue to play. But these hits can come back and impact you in your later years.

CTE impacts mental and emotional health by disrupting the balance of neurochemicals in the brain. When a person suffers a concussion, Crutchfield explained, “It incites a release of glutamine, which in turn disrupts the brain’s potassium and sodium channels. In addition, an influx of calcium to the nerve cells shut down the mitochondria, which supply energy to the brain. This causes the brain to go into ‘energy failure.’ You require energy for the brain to balance back out and for the neurotransmitters to stay in balance. And so that’s what leads to depression, because depression is a neurochemical imbalance. It’s common in brain injuries to suffer injury-related depression because of the unbalance of chemicals. When the injuries are suffered repeatedly over time, it becomes more and more difficult for the brain to recover from the imbalance, and the condition can potentially become permanent or even worsen over time.” According to Crutchfield, these symptoms don’t just impact you they impact everyone around them, and yes there is no cure. But, just think if a trainer held you out of the game or checked for a concussion during the game, it might prevent these problems later.

Among the NFL legends found to have had CTE are Duerson, Hall of Famer Pittsburgh Steelers center Mike Webster and former San Diego Chargers legend Junior Seau. ESPN’s Outside the Lines reported that a New York neuropathologist had discovered signs of CTE in the brain of Jovan Belcher. In 2012, the former Kansas City Chiefs linebacker shot and killed his girlfriend before driving to a Chiefs practice facility, where he committed suicide in front of team officials (Breslow). This is just another example of a tragic death that happened from common blows to the head during a routine game.

Researchers have now examined the brain tissue of 128 football players who, before their deaths, played the game professionally, semi-professionally, in college or in high school. Of that sample, 101 players, or just under 80 percent, tested positive for CTE (Breslow). This number amazes me because so many players that died already had CTE. Football is one of America’s favorite sports but fans do not realize the amount of danger there actually is. When I watch, I see the trainers on
the sidelines and on the other side are the players. The trainers should have more interaction with the players to make sure everything is going just fine.

Concussions can turn deadly no matter how you look at it. But some said the NFL has already done enough to prevent concussions. In 2013, the NFL updated their protocol with players and concussions. One major change in the protocol is that a certified athletic trainer watches the game to look at the hits players take. This would improve communication. Another point is if a player received a concussion the doctor would check for symptoms everyday until his symptoms were gone. This might stop concussions from worsening however a player can still get disease. Doctors should still be checking the players even after the symptoms have cleared. The NFL has tried to address the concussion issue but it is time for a complete update and overhaul of the current concussion protocol.

Eight months after Seau death, the scientists who examined his brain announced they had found evidence of CTE, the dire neurological disease linked to concussions, which has been a factor in the deaths of many other NFL players. It's impossible to pinpoint the degree to which CTE drove Seau's rapid decline. As stated above, the disease has been connected to depression, insomnia, emotional withdrawal, and compulsive behavior—all of which afflicted him. But there is one item everybody close to Seau agrees on: In his final years, Junior was no longer the Junior they had known and loved. This is an ongoing problem and the players, team owners and most importantly the fans need to be the voices and demand the NFL end this problem.

Works Cited


Crees, Alex. "Junior Seau's Death Again Highlights Risks of Repeated Concussions, Head Injuries." Fox News. FOX News Network, 03 May 2012. Web. 01 June

This is an advanced 8th grade Argument Essay. This writer chose a topic that is personally important to him as he is an avid sports fan which is clear in the voice of his essay. However, he also chose a topic that is currently relevant in the news which makes it relate to a wider audience. This writer gives a clear statement to the reader about what should be done about this issue. Many writers struggle to make a defining call to action which relates to the overall argument, but this writer is able to make this happen.
This is an advanced paper for use of sources, writer’s voice, and content. As mentioned in Comment 14, the writer’s organization could have been improved for reader’s clarity.