

Tackling CTE

CTE was found in brains of 110 out of 111 deceased former NFL players

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SAN ANTONIO - In a just-released, largest study of its kind, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy, or CTE was found in the brains of 110 out of 111 deceased former NFL players who donated their brains to medical science.

Researchers believe CTE is linked to concussions and leads to depression, neurological disorders, and sometimes suicide. Now, a former Denver Bronco and a Genomics Research Institute are teaming up to try to diagnose the condition while sufferers are still alive.

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Steve Jordan works for a real estate development company now. For 13 years, he played for the Minnesota Vikings. His son, Cameron, plays for the Saints. That's why Steve was quick to volunteer for a study to detect CTE.

"By trying to find biomarkers or whatever it is to detect CTE, you're just preparing people to know how to address it as they go on," Jordan told Ivanhoe.

Aethlon Medical CEO Jim Joyce, also a former pro football player for the Denver Broncos, was inspired to launch this study by Tom McHale, an NFL player diagnosed with CTE after his death. Right now, an autopsy is the only way to confirm CTE, but the test researchers are working on could change that.

"It's a biomarker we see in the circulatory system, and it seems to be at very elevated levels in former NFL subjects as compared to controls," Joyce explained.

A biomarker called TauSome carries tau protein in the body. With CTE, tau tangles, causing neurological damage. Joyce and researcher Kendall Van Keuren-Jensen previously participated in an NIH study showing that NFL players had nine times as much tau as did a control group. Alzheimer's patients had ten.

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“Currently there are no treatments for CTE, but there are drugs and things that people are using for Alzheimer's disease that may diminish the amount of tau and so maybe those things could be used in CTE,” Kendall Van Keuren-Jensen, PhD, Co-Lead Researcher stated.

Steve Jordan has offered to be one of up to 200 NFL players in the study.

“I think we're going to help ourselves get closer to identification and therefore, hopefully, a cure,” Jordan said.

The tau study could have results published in a year or so. Jim Joyce hopes to validate similar high TauSome levels in CTE patients and Alzheimer's patients. That could open up anti-tau drug trials for the NFL players and others diagnosed with CTE.