



THE GEORGE INSTITUTE
for International Health

MEDIA RELEASE
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Study on Brain Injury in Rugby Players Will Enhance Safety and Recovery

Coinciding with International Brain Awareness Week (13- 19 March 2006), The George Institute for International Health will launch the second phase of a large-scale study on mild-Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI) among non-elite rugby union and league players in Sydney.

The study will provide the evidence upon which guidelines/policies can be developed that manage a player's return to the sporting field following a concussion. Last year, more than 1200 rugby players from various schools and clubs around Sydney were observed throughout the season. Research staff investigated the rate of mTBI and assessed the risk and protective factors for injury and recovery. Sydney schools and clubs are encouraged to participate in the recruitment for the second season of the study, which begins this month.

Professor Mark Stevenson, Director of Injury Prevention and Trauma Care at The George Institute said there is an immediate need for a study of this kind, "The guidelines that currently exist for players who sustain a concussion or mild traumatic brain injury are inconsistent."

"The lack of evidence-based guidelines has led to *ad hoc* decisions, which can endanger the player's recovery and safety. To develop effective guidelines information is needed not only on how often head injuries occur, but what the risk and protective factors for these injuries are and importantly, how players recover following a concussion," He added.

“We are recruiting schools and clubs for the second season and those who wish to be involved can simply contact us to arrange a time for baseline testing to be carried out.” Upon completion of the project, 3,500 rugby union players aged 16 to 35 years will have been assessed.

The George Institute is undertaking the study in collaboration with the School of Safety Science and the NSW Injury Risk Management Research Centre, University of New South Wales, and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Center for Sports Medicine, USA. The Institute acknowledges the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USA for funding the research.

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For further information or to arrange an interview, contact Emma Eyles, Public Affairs Officer, The George Institute for International Health on ph: +612 9993 4592, mobile: 0410 411 983, email: eeyles@thegeorgeinstitute.org or visit The George Institute website at www.thegeorgeinstitute.org.

Notes for Editors:

The George Institute for International Health seeks to gather evidence to address the growing problems of heart and vascular disease, injury, mental illness and neurological diseases through high-quality research, evidence-based policy development and a range of capacity development programs.

Professor Mark Stevenson, Director, Injury Prevention and Trauma Care Division

Mark Stevenson is Director of the Injury Prevention and Trauma Care Division at The George Institute and a Professor in the School of Public Health at The University of Sydney. Prior to these appointments, he was an Associate Professor in the School of Population Health, in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at The University of Western Australia. Mark has also worked as an Associate Professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at Curtin University, Perth, Australia; as an epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, USA; and has spent time at Harvard University School of Public Health. A strong advocate for road and child injury prevention, Mark has worked on numerous national and international projects related to these areas. He is a member of the Australasian Trauma Society, sits on the editorial boards of international journals, is Chair of the New South Wales (Sydney) Chapter of the Australasian College of Road Safety and is a member of the Technical Advisory Group for The Alliance for Safe Children.