

Education Committee
Public Hearing Testimony
Laura Colglazier, middle school student with concussion
Simsbury, CT
March 17, 2010

I had a concussion (mild- traumatic brain injury) on July 4th, 2009. It is now March and I am still experiencing many physical concussion symptoms, memory, attention and other cognitive problems, and many vision problems. I feel that misdiagnoses is a big problem, that there should be much more general public awareness (and obviously doctor awareness) on concussions, that Impact tests should be administered before high school, and that doctors definitely aren't the only people that help recovery from a concussion. Specialized therapists are the main people who have helped me with my rehabilitation.

I was not only misdiagnosed by two neurologists, an ophthalmologist, and a neuro-ophthalmologist, but treated very poorly by them.

My mom and I went to the first neurologist, associated with Hartford Hospital, less than a month after my head injury. He had me do five push ups, which brought on symptoms (not the kind when you are out of shape). Because I could do the push-ups, he declared I was fine and that I just got stressed out too easily.

A while after that, we went to a neurologist at Connecticut Children's Medical Center. He was worse than the first one. This neurologist gave me pain killers and had me run up and down a hall. It made my head pound like crazy (I still can't run yet today), and he didn't even let me talk, laughed at me in the face, said my vision problems had nothing to do with a head injury, that I did not have a concussion, and rudely told us that I did not have any problems and treated me like I was some sort of freak.

I was having lots of eye problems (for example double and blurry vision), which is a new thing for me (I have never had any vision problems before this injury), so I went to an ophthalmologist. He said I was just one of those people that gets stressed out and that stress can do crazy things to your eyes. That was obviously not true, so we went to a neuro- ophthalmologist. This doctor said I had psychological problems and that stress can do weird things to your eyes just like the first one because my MRI came out clean.

I went to CCMC ER a couple times because my head hurt so badly and I couldn't get up. They gave me pain killers and because after that I could walk in a pretty straight line, recite 3 words back to them, and passed an eye test (for which took me over 5 minutes to clear my eyes), they said I was fine.

ER told us we could go to a concussion clinic if we questioned things, so we did. They said I had a concussion and classic concussion symptoms. They said that I should try to get to zero symptoms, which never came very close to happening, but didn't really know much more than we did, and didn't have any suggestions for us.

Eventually we found a good neuro-psychologist for cognitive treatment and went to Boston to see a team of doctors (mainly a good neurologist). That neurologist gave me pain killers, understood my problems, had good suggestions (which helped a lot), and I am currently able to start up school gradually again.

I think it is disgusting that that first number of doctors treated me so poorly and that it took us six months to find a decent doctor.

I have hit my head tons of times in many things. None of them were concussions that I know of. I remember going to a pediatrician when I was in elementary school to make sure I was okay after hitting my head hard. That doctor told me that because I didn't have a huge lump on my head and I didn't have any indentation on my head that it couldn't have been a concussion. This doctor was a very good doctor and not like the other doctors I have spoken negatively about. She simply didn't know anything about concussions. Now I not only know that what she told me was nowhere near correct, but that any hit on the head can cause a mild- traumatic brain injury. I also know that although not every hit to the head is a concussion, hits can cause sub-concussions, for example heading a soccer ball slightly wrong, or the bumping of a head on the side of a pool. Had I been aware of this before, I probably wouldn't be in so much of a fix.

I think it is unquestionable that not only all doctors, but the public needs to be more aware that it doesn't necessarily matter how hard you hit your head. The key is to look at the symptoms afterward. People should take a rest from school and definitely sports after no matter what.

I have been active in sports since I was five years old. I have played sports like travel soccer, travel basketball, swim team, lacrosse, and field hockey. I know many people who have suffered concussions before high school (I am currently in middle school) although none as extensive or significant as mine.

I know that 4th grade is when travel sports begin, and therefore when sports begin to become more intense. I strongly feel that that is when impact tests should first be administered. For me it was somewhat of a problem that I had not had the impact test before because we had no basis for what I was before my concussion, and therefore could only guess what the difference is now, after.

I also have found that it is not necessarily the doctors that have aided in my recovery, but therapists such as a cranial sacral therapist that works on aligning your body and making your systems work right, and a vision therapist that helps you to train your vision helping cognitive function, balance, and of course vision.

I think doctors that receive concussion patients should definitely inform those patients of options such as these to help decrease the time in a recovery. I know in my experience, many doctors think of these types of therapies as useless and fake and that is why none of these are covered by insurance (which is an issue in itself). Those therapists are the people who made the most difference in my recovery.

In conclusion, I feel that general concussion medical treatment, awareness, prevention, and recovery still have a long way to go, but is starting to get there. I sincerely hope that my experiences can allow others in the future not to face the same challenges I did, and your understanding of this will allow people to benefit from my experiences.