



FROM: The Foundation for the National Institutes of Health  
Bethesda, Maryland

CONTACT: Rubenstein Communications, Inc.  
Alison Hendrie 212-843-8029 [ahendrie@rubenstein.com](mailto:ahendrie@rubenstein.com)  
Alexandra Sturm 212-843-9342 [asturm@rubenstein.com](mailto:asturm@rubenstein.com)

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)  
Marian Emr 301-496-5924 [NINDSPressTeam@ninds.nih.gov](mailto:NINDSPressTeam@ninds.nih.gov)

## **FOUNDATION FOR THE NIH JOINS NIH IN SEEKING PROPOSALS TO STUDY SPORTS-RELATED BRAIN INJURIES**

### *Sports Health and Research Program a Partnership with NIH and NFL*

Bethesda, MD (April 3, 2013)– The FNIH today announced that the Sports and Health Research Program (SHRP) is seeking NIH grant proposals from experts in the field to study the detection, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of sports-related brain injuries. The SHRP -- sponsored by the NFL in collaboration with the NIH and announced last September – is conducting research focused on the long-term health effect of injuries sustained by professional and amateur athletes in order to gain more insight into serious medical conditions that affect both athletes and the general public.

Through support from SHRP, the NIH is calling for the best and brightest scientists and physicians to conduct ground-breaking medical research to enhance our understanding of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) and other long-term effects of traumatic brain injury (TBI) and spinal cord injury.

“We are encouraged by the momentum the SHRP team is building in such a short time with the announcement of these pioneering new research initiatives,” said Maria Freire, Ph.D., President of the FNIH. “Thanks to the generosity of the NFL, the program will provide us with invaluable data and ultimately ways to prevent and treat injuries in ways that will benefit athletes and non-athletes alike.”

"The research and results generated by the SHRP will help medical professionals understand more about head injuries not only in athletes, but also in the general population. We are proud to

be collaborating with the FNIH on this important work," said Roger Goodell, NFL commissioner.

While the five-year-long, \$30 million program is initially focusing on brain injury, especially in athletes and veterans, SHRP may eventually expand to encompass other sports-related issues such as chronic degenerative joint disease, the transition from acute to chronic pain, sudden cardiac arrest in young athletes, and heat and hydration-related illness and injury. The FNIH welcomes other donors, including additional sports organizations, to join the collaboration.

The first research initiative will investigate the neuropathology of CTE and delayed effects of TBI using postmortem biospecimens and histological and neuroimaging tools. Currently CTE can only be diagnosed by examination of the brain after death. It has been observed in athletes exposed to repetitive brain trauma and veterans exposed to blast trauma and other head injuries.

Main areas of new research include developing a better understanding of how commonly CTE occurs in those exposed to a variety of head injuries; development of neuroimaging or other tools that can diagnose the condition in life, clarification of the relationship between clinical signs, symptoms, and risk factors for post-traumatic neurodegeneration and CTE; comparisons between repetitive traumatic events and single events; and characterizing the relationship of CTE with other neurodegenerative disorders such as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and Alzheimer's disease. This research should contribute to improved understanding of the prevalence and causes of CTE and TBI, as well as the development of improved diagnostic tools.

The second program will support pilot projects on sports-related TBI and spinal cord injury that break new ground and elucidate new research directions to address the many gaps in knowledge about these potentially disabling conditions. This initiative hopes to allow for a wide range of sports and non-sports experts in the scientific field to weigh in on this serious issue. The program will provide support through small grants and larger exploratory/developmental grants for research on such topics as mechanical and biological mechanisms of injury and recovery; genetic and environmental risk factors; development of age-appropriate diagnostics and equipment for prevention; ways pain medications, psychiatric medications, and other substances may interact with the effects of trauma, and preclinical therapy development for improving outcomes.

"NINDS is eager to engage the scientific community to definitively answer a vexing public health question of concern to millions in the US who have suffered concussions," said Walter Koroshetz, Deputy Director of the NIH National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke which will oversee the research. "We are grateful to both the Foundation and the NFL for providing this opportunity and look forward to a rapid advance in this field."

The NIH's sports-related research projects are open for submission of applications between April 14 and May 14, 2013 at 5:00 PM EDT. The NIH will review the applications for scientific merit beginning in August and present the highest rated proposals to the Institute's advisory council in October so that research can commence before the end of the year.

For more information, please visit <http://www.fnih.org/work/key-initiatives/sports-and-health-research-program>

###