

Research Matters

Parents'/guardians' experiences with their adolescents' prolonged recovery from a sport-related concussion

ABOUT THIS STUDY

In this study, Lucas et al explore the experiences of parents and guardians of teenagers who have suffered from sport-related concussions (SRCs) and have prolonged recovery periods. The research aims to understand the challenges parents face, and strategies they can implement, in helping their teen navigate their recovery process.

KEY FINDINGS

- Adolescents often experience more severe, and longer-lasting, symptoms from SRCs compared to other age groups. This is particularly concerning as adolescence is a crucial developmental period.
- Parents play a significant role in the recovery process, especially when recovery is prolonged. However, this role is challenging as teenagers are increasingly seeking independence and are often resistant to parental involvement and restrictions on their usual activities.
- Adolescent athletes may be particularly resistant to imposed activity restrictions following an SRC, due to how their participation in sports informs their emerging athletic identity, which in turn feeds directly into their social interactions and friendships.
- Eight thematic categories emerged from the interviews with parents: difficulties enforcing cognitive and physical rest, concerns about depression and isolation, observing struggles with athletic identity, feelings of frustration, helplessness, and stress, challenges of a hidden injury, decisions about returning to sport, being lied to about symptoms, and offering strategies and practical advice.
- Adolescents with persistent post-concussive symptoms experience physical issues like fatigue, headaches, and sleep disruptions, as well as psychological issues such as feeling isolated, disconnected, fearful, and stressed.
- Parents often feel emotionally impacted by their child's injury, expressing worry about their child's future, and feeling as though they are on an emotional roller coaster.
- Parents also expressed confusion and dissatisfaction with concussion management guidelines and a gap in their knowledge of concussion management.

STUDY IMPLICATIONS

- The findings highlight the need for a biopsychosocial approach to care, in order to adequately support parents/guardians and adolescents during the SRC recovery process. This approach integrates knowledge from biological, behavioral, and social sciences to understand the all-encompassing nature of recovery.
- There is a need for clear and accessible concussion management guidelines for parents. This could help alleviate confusion and empower parents to make informed decisions about their child's recovery.
- The study suggests that healthcare and school professionals need to coordinate closely with parents during the recovery process. This could help ensure that the adolescent's physical, cognitive, and social needs are met.
- The findings underscore the importance of emotional and psychological support for both the adolescent and their parents. This could help manage feelings of isolation, fear, stress, and frustration that often accompany SRCs.

REFERENCE

Lucas, S., Bolter, N. D., Petranek, L. J., Nilsson, K., Pardue, K., & Flint, H. (2023). Parents'/guardians' experiences with their adolescents' prolonged recovery from a sport-related concussion. *Journal of Concussion*, 7, <https://doi.org/10.1177/205970022311609>.