New Concussion Survey Reveals Majority Of Adults Are Unable To Recognize Common Concussion Symptoms

- Data findings highlight common misconceptions about mild brain injuries

- More than 80 percent of adults cannot identify the most common signs and symptoms of concussion

- 11 percent say they would go to the emergency room if they thought they had a concussion

- 6 in 10 people believe that a person must lose consciousness for a concussion

ABBOTT PARK, Ill., Aug. 24, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- With students heading back to school and the fall sports season approaching, surprising new data from Abbott's Concussion IQ Survey reveals that a large number of adults in the United States lack basic understanding about concussion signs and symptoms, risk and treatment.

Every minute, approximately four people in the U.S. experience a concussion,[1] yet it is estimated that up to 50 percent of all mild brain injuries go unreported.[2] Knowing about concussion and getting diagnosed early is key to getting the right treatment for a person to recover and better their chances to return safely to activities they most enjoy.

The survey, conducted by KRC Research in partnership with Abbott, the global healthcare company, polled more than 1,000 adults in the U.S. (over the age of 18) and aimed to understand general awareness and perceptions of concussion. The key findings include:

- Adults are five times more likely to seek medical attention for a broken bone compared to if they thought they had a concussion.
- Six in 10 adults don't understand that treating a concussion includes mental rest, which may mean limiting time spent on cell phones, watching TV and other activities that could worsen symptoms.
- More than 80 percent of adults believe a person should not sleep and be woken up periodically after being diagnosed with a concussion.
- 64 percent of adults say they did not seek medical attention the last time they hit their head very hard, but 9 in 10 people would seek medical attention for a child.
- Almost 70 percent of parents would not send their child to school the day after they hit their head very hard, but over half say they would still go to work or school themselves after a hard hit to the head.

"Based on the survey results, it is clear there is a need to build more awareness and understanding about concussion," says Dr. Beth McQuiston, board-certified neurologist and medical director, Diagnostics, Abbott. "Parents, athletes, coaches and beyond need to be able to recognize signs of concussion to help people seek proper care and rest."

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Concussions, also called mild traumatic brain injuries, occur when an external force shakes or jostles the brain inside the skull. They can be invisible injuries, and many of the symptoms can be confused with other conditions such as dehydration or not getting enough sleep. Although they can vary, common signs of concussion can include dizziness, blurred vision, balance problems, nausea, vomiting, fatigue and increased anxiety or irritability.

A common misconception is that a person will become unconscious during a mild concussion, but in fact, most people do not lose consciousness. According to the survey, many adults also believe that a person should not sleep or should not be woken up during the night after a concussion. However, sleep and rest are usually recommended for those who have a brain injury.

"Quickly diagnosing a concussion is critical for doctors to recommend appropriate treatment and minimize further injury," said Dr. McQuiston. "However, you can't treat what you don't know."

Currently, there is no fool-proof way to diagnose a mild brain injury, and while imaging such as CT scans can help, the majority of these scans can appear normal even when an injury has occurred. Because of this, many concussions go undiagnosed and untreated.

To address this issue, Abbott is partnering with the U.S. Department of Defense with the goal of developing a blood test capable of evaluating potential concussions. Currently in development, the test will be designed to detect specific proteins in the blood associated with brain injury and will be used on Abbott's i-STAT – a handheld, portable analyzer that is used to perform a broad range of common blood tests.

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[1] http://www.cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury/get_the_facts.html

[2] http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23243113

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