

Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE): The impact of repeated brain trauma.

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Introduction

Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that occurs as a result of repeated brain trauma. It has garnered significant attention in recent years due to its association with contact sports, especially American football. The condition has raised concerns about the long-term health effects of sports-related head injuries and has prompted increased research and awareness. In this article, we will explore the intricacies of CTE, including its symptoms, risk factors, pathophysiology, diagnosis, and prevention [1].

Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE)

CTE is a debilitating brain disorder that develops over time, typically years or even decades after experiencing repetitive head injuries. It is not exclusive to athletes and can also affect individuals with a history of military combat, domestic abuse, or any other form of repetitive head trauma. CTE is characterized by the accumulation of abnormal proteins, including tau, in the brain. These protein deposits lead to the gradual degeneration of brain tissue, particularly in regions responsible for cognition, memory, and emotional regulation[2].

Symptoms of chronic traumatic encephalopathy

The symptoms of CTE can be diverse and may vary depending on the stage of the disease. However, some common symptoms include: Memory loss, Impaired judgment, Difficulty with impulse control, Depression and anxiety, Aggression and irritability, Problems with balance and coordination, Speech and language difficulties, Suicidal thoughts or behavior, Cognitive decline, Dementia. It is essential to note that these symptoms can overlap with other neurological conditions, making CTE challenging to diagnose accurately. Compulsive behaviors to alleviate anxiety [3].

Risk factors for chronic traumatic encephalopathy

The primary risk factor for CTE is a history of repetitive brain trauma. Factors that contribute to this risk include: Sports participation: Athletes involved in contact sports, such as football, rugby, ice hockey, soccer, and boxing, are at a higher risk due to the frequent collisions and blows to the head. Military combat: Military personnel exposed to blast injuries or concussive events during combat operations may also be susceptible to CTE. Domestic abuse and physical

violence: Individuals who experience repetitive head injuries from domestic abuse or physical violence are also at risk. Genetics: Some research suggests that certain genetic factors may influence an individual's vulnerability to CTE. However, more studies are needed to fully understand this relationship.

Pathophysiology of chronic traumatic encephalopathy

The exact mechanisms underlying CTE are still being investigated. However, researchers have identified two hallmark features: Tau protein abnormalities: In a healthy brain, tau proteins stabilize microtubules and aid in the transport of nutrients and other essential substances within neurons. In CTE, repeated brain trauma leads to the misfolding and accumulation of tau proteins. These abnormal tau deposits form neurofibrillary tangles, disrupting cellular function and contributing to neuronal degeneration. Inflammatory response: Following brain injury, an inflammatory response occurs as the body attempts to repair damaged tissue. However, chronic inflammation can become detrimental, contributing to the progressive degeneration of brain cells in CTE. The accumulation of tau tangles and the chronic inflammatory process lead to the gradual deterioration of brain tissue, affecting cognitive and emotional functions over time [4].

Diagnosis of chronic traumatic encephalopathy

Currently, a definitive diagnosis of CTE can only be made post-mortem through a neuropathological examination of the brain tissue. During this examination, pathologists look for the presence of tau protein deposits and other characteristic abnormalities in specific brain regions. However, researchers and medical professionals are actively working on developing diagnostic tools to identify CTE in living individuals. Advanced brain imaging techniques, such as positron emission tomography (PET) scans using tau-specific tracers, are being explored as potential tools for early detection.

Prevention and management of chronic traumatic encephalopathy

Given the irreversible nature of CTE, prevention is of utmost importance. Strategies for reducing the risk of CTE include: Rule changes and protective gear: Sports organizations can implement rule changes and promote the use of protective gear to minimize the frequency and intensity of head impacts. Education and awareness: Raising awareness about the signs and symptoms of concussion and the potential long-term consequences of head injuries can encourage individuals to

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seek appropriate medical attention promptly. Safer sports practices: Coaches and trainers can adopt safer sports practices, emphasizing proper techniques and discouraging unnecessary rough play. Concussion protocols: Establishing comprehensive concussion protocols in sports and military settings can ensure that individuals with head injuries receive appropriate medical evaluation and care. Research and innovation: Continued research into the pathophysiology of CTE can help identify potential therapeutic targets and interventions for individuals at risk. Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy is a complex and devastating neurodegenerative disease associated with repeated brain trauma. While CTE has gained significant attention due to its link with contact sports, it is essential to recognize that anyone exposed to repetitive head injuries is at risk. Early detection and prevention are crucial in addressing this public health concern. A collaborative effort between researchers, medical professionals, sports organizations, and policymakers is necessary to develop effective strategies for managing CTE and reducing its incidence. Moreover, prioritizing player safety in sports and promoting awareness about the long-term consequences of head injuries can help safeguard the brain health of current and future generations [5].

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