



For Immediate Release
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TMC teams up with the CACTIS Foundation to establish baseline concussion testing for young athletes

Athletes, parents, coaches and staff will learn comprehensive baseline testing procedures during a demonstration at the opening ceremonies of the Ft. Lowell Shootout

WHEN: Friday, Jan. 16, 3:30 to 7 p.m.

WHERE: Ft. Lowell Park, 2900 N. Craycroft; TMC staff will be set up by the playground and pool

Tucson, Ariz. – Tucson Medical Center is teaming up with the Central Arizona Center for Therapy and Imaging Services Foundation and Conquering Concussions, LLC, to respond to an emerging health concern affecting thousands of young athletes in Southern Arizona.

Increased awareness about sports-related concussions in current and former professional athletes led the CACTIS Foundation to examine other youth-league sports programs, notably soccer. Researchers found that concussions affect an estimated 15 percent of those playing contact sports. They also discovered other than a required sports physical, there were few processes or “best practices” in place regulating how coaches and other youth development professionals evaluate injured players and how parents are educated on keeping their children safe while playing soccer.

An estimated 5,000 youth soccer players are expected to attend the Ft. Lowell Shootout.

The interactive demonstration will allow the young athletes to experience the neurocognitive, balance, eye tracking, convergence and hand-eye coordination tests that can establish a baseline record for the player. This baseline can then be used after a head blow when the athlete is being evaluated and can guide post-concussion treatment and management, including when to return to play and school. “This is often the most difficult decision athletic trainers, physicians and coaches have to make, especially in the young athlete, whose brain matures and responds to trauma at its own and highly individual rate,” said Hirsch Handmaker, M.D., chairman and CEO at CACTIS.

Athletes between ages 6 and 16 are the most vulnerable in suffering from premature “return to play” and “return to learn,” which focuses on a child returning to school.

CACTIS supports the implementation of a mandatory and comprehensive baseline concussion-screening program for all athletes in contact sports programs prior to the season and in conjunction with routine pre-season physical examinations.

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The “Tackle the Brain Challenges” developed by CACTIS in collaboration with Conquering Concussions can be easily remembered using the word BRAINS:

- **BALANCE:** Balance and posture are maintained with input from the eyes, inner ears and skeletal muscles.
 - Damage from a concussion would discoordinate and confuse these inputs, which can be measured as balance instability.
- **READING:** Cognitive function, or brain power, comes from networks of neurons functioning at the right time and in the right place.
 - Damage from a concussion changes when and where neuronal networks function, which impairs things like reading and thinking.
- **ACTION:** Coordinated movements are accomplished by large and small corrections of errors, which are compared between movements and what is seen.
 - Damage from a concussion would disrupt the corrections made between intended movement and executed movement.
- **I is for EYES:** The eyes follow objects that move by finding a point on the object and then moving with (or opposite) the object.
 - Damage from a concussion would impair the response of the eyes to follow a moving object.
- **NEAR SIGHT:** Convergence is the simultaneous movement of both eyes to allow focusing on a single object with both eyes.
 - Damage from a concussion would impair the ability to focus on near and far objects, often creating double vision.
- **SPEED:** When challenged to perform faster, errors can increase and accuracy can suffer.
 - Damage from a concussion would reduce the speed to complete a nine-hole peg test, which shows impaired dexterity.

About CACTIS

CACTIS is an Arizona-based 501(c)3 institution focused on advancing the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease. We accomplish this by supporting research-oriented preclinical and early phase clinical trials and continuing medical education (CME) programs for health care professionals. Our current programs are in sports medicine (especially concussions), oncology, informatics and molecular imaging, with a significant attention to addressing health care delivery disparities of underserved communities.

About Conquering Concussions

Conquering Concussions’ mission is to be the provider and partner of choice for "Best Practices" facilities for the innovative multidisciplinary assessment and management of concussion patients of all ages through relationships with leading health care providers. To achieve this mission, the organization founded by, and is continually recruiting, recognized clinical leaders in concussion research and clinical practice to join the Conquering Concussions team.

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