

Ethics After Hours

Concussion Movie (Drama)

Summary¹

In 2002, pathologist Dr. Bennett Omalu examined the body of the deceased Pittsburgh Steelers player Mike Webster, and discovered that he died from severe brain damage. Over the next years, Bennett examines three other diseased NFL players and find very similar symptoms as those that Webster displayed. The examination of Webster's and the three other football players bodies leads him to the discovery of a correlation between symptomatic concussions as well asymptomatic subconcussive hits on the head, often experienced by football players and other athletes, and the degenerative brain disease, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE). Bennet published his results with help from the Pittsburgh Steelers' former team doctor, Julian Bailes, and county coroner Cyril Wecht. However, Bennett soon finds himself under pressure from the NFL to scale back his efforts to communicate with football players about the risks they are taking by playing football.

Duration: 1h 22mins

Released, 2015.

Director: Peter Landesman

Written by: Peter Landesman

This movie is available on Netflix

Questions:

- Many of Dr. Bennett's colleagues find it odd that he talks to the deceased just prior to examining the body. In your opinion, what does showing respect for the dead body entail?
- Do you think children should be banned from contact sports such as football or boxing to prevent CTE in young athletes?

¹ Summary is adapted from Wikipedia article: Conocussion [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concussion_\(2015_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concussion_(2015_film))

- Most sports come with risk of injury. In your opinion, what level of risk is tolerable? How should we manage risk of injury to players at various levels of competition?
- Mitigating rules and guidelines may reduce the risk of concussions in contact sports like football and hockey, but do you think more should be done? Why?
- What ethical obligations do sports communities at the professional, college, and high school levels have in terms of communicating to parents and players about the risks associated with a given sport?
- What do you think motivates people to knowingly risk their health to play the game? Are these risks similar to other health risks people knowingly incur?
- Do you think the benefits to children from being part of team sports such as football or hockey outweigh the risks that these types of sports pose for their health?