



All Chest Protectors May Soon Be Obsolete

Advancements in commotio cordis protection upend status quo

GLEN MILLS, Pa. (April 4, 2018) – Due to advancements in player protection and the resultant duty of care imposed by negligence laws, athletic leagues, regulatory agencies, sports governing bodies and associations, clubs, teams, schools and even coaches are becoming more proactive about commotio cordis, the No. 2 killer in sports. According to [Unequal](#), a leading manufacturer of sports protective gear, organizations and individuals now exposed are duty-bound to implement protection protocols for athletes and information campaigns for parents to help mitigate the catastrophic financial losses they could face, especially now that commotio can be viewed as a preventable death. Ignorance is no longer bliss.



What changed? An historic, important breakthrough for commotio cordis protection occurred with the invention of the [Unequal HART device](#). Then, in a peer-reviewed, published study from Tufts Medical Center in the Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine, Unequal's effectiveness in [greatly reducing the risk of commotio cordis was proven](#). Subsequently, a Food and Drug Administration Intended-for-Use (IFU) claim for the Unequal HART device was issued.

What is commotio cordis? It is sudden death due to ventricular fibrillation induced by a blunt, nonpenetrating blow to the chest caused by impact from a ball, stick or hand. It's not just a goalie or catcher problem, as originally suspected. In fact, the sport of lacrosse once suffered four commotio deaths in one month by two goalies, a midfielder and an attacker. Commotio can happen to any player at any position in many sports. A Croatian soccer player who was recently struck in the chest with a soccer ball and died on the field is yet one more horrific reminder.

The National Federation of High Schools, or NFHS, was the first to issue a mandate requiring catcher chest protectors to have commotio cordis protection. Elliot Hopkins, NFHS director of sports, sanctioning and student services, presented the details of the new NFHS mandate at the American Baseball Coaches Association conference in January 2018. Other organizations are now realizing they must make similar upgrades to their equipment standards while raising commotio awareness among coaches and parents.

The inspiration for this invention was Tom Adams, the father of a 16-year-old commotio victim, who proclaimed, "No one should die playing sports." In fact, there are tens of millions of at-risk athletes playing contact sports in the U.S. alone – from baseball, lacrosse and soccer to martial arts, football, equestrian, even tennis. Overseas, the sport of cricket is in dire need of this level of protection.

Surprisingly, 20 percent of Europe's commotio fatalities occur in soccer. But that is about to change if organizations take the right steps in reducing commotio risk.

"Commotio injuries and deaths will be the next green field for trial lawyers," said Joseph Murphy, a trial lawyer in Pittsburgh [who has been published on the subject of commotio cordis liability](#). "Now that there is proven, effective protection for commotio, athletic leagues, sports governing bodies and associations, schools and coaches are exposed to serious liability and catastrophic financial losses unless they act. As a father, and longtime supporter of sports safety, I want to do something to protect the kids and raise awareness. Until now, athletes were defenseless against commotio, but Unequal changed that and thankfully commotio can now be categorized as a preventable death."

The duty of care doctrine requires that an institution must, at all times, meet or exceed all applicable standards of care. Institutions should provide athletes access to head and heart safety equipment. A member of an athletic department or administration that denies athletes access to such safety equipment, or does not inform them that effective protection exists, creates potential liability for themselves, the athletic department and the institution.

"It's not unusual for a coach to be sued for negligence after a student-athlete suffers an injury or dies," Murphy explained. "Blame rolls uphill. It begins with the athletic trainers, coaches and staff that work with the players daily, because their job is to ensure player safety. Yet administrators, school board members, presidents of clubs, executive directors and the like get blamed as well because they also have a duty to ensure that anyone directly or indirectly working with athletes takes reasonable steps to keep athletes as safe as possible."

Now that effective commotio cordis protection is available and thought leaders and organizations are recognizing their responsibilities to inform and protect their constituents, there is hope on the horizon that deaths from commotio cordis will drop and headlines announcing another commotio cordis death will eventually disappear.

###

About Unequal

Invented by company founder and CEO Rob Vito, Unequal is military-grade protection that has been modified for sport. With more than 100 patents in the U.S. and abroad, Unequal is fortified with protective technology like no other. From the World Cup to the NFL to collegiate, high school and youth league players, Unequal protects.

Unequal's military-grade composites are built with TriDur, Accelleron, Airilon and optional ImpacShield. This ultralight, ultrathin athletic gear works differently than virtually every other traditional foam and plastic of equal weight and thickness on the market. It absorbs, disperses and dissipates impact energy away from the body to provide the ultimate in protection. Unequal does not compromise mobility and bolsters confidence, allowing athletes to play at a higher level.

###

Media Contact

Jeff Cheatham
Account Supervisor
TrizCom PR
o. 972.247.1369
c. 972.961.6171
jeffc@trizcom.com