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National Academy of Neuropsychology (NAN) and National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) Team Up on Campaign to Raise Concussion Awareness

Concussion Awareness and Safety Campaign Aims to Reduce Concussions in Youth, High School and College Hockey and other Athletic Programs

DALLAS, DENVER, (September 24, 2009) – Concussions are by far the most common, and one of the most difficult to manage injuries seen in sports today. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are between 1.6 million and 3.8 million brain injuries that occur in sports each year – and 63,000 occur in high school athletes alone. The National Academy of Neuropsychology (NAN) and National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) have joined forces on a national and local grassroots campaign to educate the public, athletes, health professionals, coaches, parents, administrators and others about concussion in sports. The overarching objective of the campaign is to raise awareness of the importance of identifying concussions and implementing appropriate management when they do occur.

As a centerpiece of the NAN and NATA efforts, a 12-minute educational video titled “Concussions in Hockey: Signs, Symptoms and Playing Safe,” has now been released nationally. The video, sponsored by the **National Hockey League** and the **NHL Players' Association**, features comments from Mike Modano of the Dallas Stars and retired NHL players Pat LaFontaine and Eric Lindros. It is available as a free online download on affiliated Web sites, including www.nanonline.org, www.nata.org, www.nhl.com and www.nhlpa.com and also available, upon request, at a cost of \$10 at www.nata.org/brochures/.

“Given the recent advancements in concussion research, education among coaches, parents, athletes, the media, and other influencers is critical,” said athletic trainer Kevin Guskiewicz, PhD, ATC, professor and chair, Department of Exercise and Sports Science at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. “The invisible nature of concussions makes it imperative that athletes and coaches properly recognize the signs and symptoms of concussions, in order to foster quicker diagnosis and medical care when needed.”

“Concussions can be serious injuries if not treated properly. Concussion symptoms can affect players in all areas of their lives including their physical, emotional and cognitive functioning,” said Ruben Echemendia, PhD, NAN past president and director of the NHL's Neuropsychological Testing Program. “Swift and appropriate evaluation by trained sports medicine professionals is crucial before an athlete returns to play. That is why we counsel students and coaches to err on the side of caution and **‘when in doubt, sit out.’**”

This educational campaign explicitly urges athletes to immediately consult with their athletic trainer, team physician or coach if they think they might have a concussion. “Even if an athlete's symptoms appear to be very mild, if they don't feel right, they must immediately tell somebody in charge,” Echemendia said.

For more information, NATA has published a position statement (pdf download) on concussions, which is available at www.nata.org/statements/position/concussion.pdf. NAN has also published a sports concussion white paper, which is available at <http://www.nanonline.org/NAN/ResearchPublications/Educationpapers.aspx>.

The National Academy of Neuropsychology (NAN) is a professional association founded in 1975 to advance Neuropsychology as a science and health profession, to promote human welfare and to generate and disseminate knowledge of brain-behavior relationships. NAN has become a vibrant organization of the world's leading scientist-practitioners, academics, clinicians and researchers in the field of brain functioning. The association's current membership is over 3,500 with representation by 17 countries. Visit www.nanonline.org.

National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) – *Health Care for Life & Sport*: Athletic trainers are health care professionals who specialize in the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of injuries and illnesses. The National Athletic Trainers' Association represents and supports 30,000 members of the athletic training profession. Only 42 percent of high schools have access to athletic trainers. NATA members adhere to a code of ethics. NATA supports the right of all patients to have equal access to the services of athletic trainers through the Athletic Trainers' Equal Access to Medicare Act (H.R. 1137). Visit www.nata.org.

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