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SPORTS LEGACY INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES BRAIN DONOR REGISTRY FOR MILITARY VETERANS

Program Will Study Effects of Brain Trauma; Creates Synergies with Existing Athlete Registry

(WALTHAM, MA) – Leading medical experts at the Sports Legacy Institute (SLI), a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational and research organization dedicated to advancing understanding of the long-term effects of brain trauma, announced today that they have launched the SLI Military Living Donor Registry, a brain and spinal cord donation registry for active and veteran members of the United States military.

Twenty active and retired members of the US Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines have pledged to donate their neural tissue upon death and agreed to have medical records and trauma histories monitored annually prior to death so that researchers can understand the neuropathological effects of trauma in a military setting, including blast injuries from improvised explosive devices (IED's). In March of 2009 the Department of Defense estimated that troops in Iraq and Afghanistan have suffered over 360,000 brain injuries, and 45,000 to 90,000 suffer ongoing symptoms.

SLI co-founder Robert Cantu, MD, chief of Neurosurgery and director of Sports Medicine at Emerson Hospital in Concord, Mass, and clinical professor Neurosurgery at Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM), said, "There is an ongoing debate in the medical and military communities concerning whether lingering neurological symptoms in troops that have suffered traumatic brain injuries are related to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Neuropathological research through brain donation may be the only way to provide definitive answers."

SLI co-founder and President Chris Nowinski added, "It is imperative that members of the Armed Forces receive appropriate treatment for injuries suffered in service of our country. The long-term effects of modern blast injury on delicate neural tissues are currently unknown. In athletes, repetitive brain trauma has shown to cause a progressive neurodegenerative disease called Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE), which may not show symptoms until years after the injury. We expect this research to break new ground, and will shed much needed light on the consequences of both single and chronic traumatic brain injury."

Registry member SSgt Paul McQuigg, who suffered three blast injuries serving in Iraq as a member of the US Marine Corps, the last of which caused damage to his mouth, tongue & jaw as well as his brain, said, "Whatever my concerns about my own future, I'm doing this to help other veterans. SLI's research on athletes has clearly shown there are consequences of head injuries which are not easily

seen and not well understood.” Members of the military interested in joining the registry can sign up for information at www.sportslegacy.org.

CTE has been described in the medical literature for approximately 80 years. Initially referred to as *dementia pugilistica* because of the boxers that were originally studied, CTE is characterized by the build-up of a toxic protein called *tau* in the form of neurofibrillary tangles (NFTs) and neuropil threads (NTs) throughout the brain. The abnormal protein initially impairs the normal functioning of the brain and eventually kills brain cells. Early on, CTE sufferers may display clinical symptoms such as memory impairment, emotional instability, erratic behavior, depression and problems with impulse control. However, CTE eventually progresses to full-blown dementia. Athletes that have been diagnosed with CTE post-mortem include former NFL players Mike Webster, Andre Waters, John Grimsley, and Tom McHale, as well as professional wrestler Chris Benoit.

The program is expected to mirror the SLI athlete registry that was launched as part of a collaboration between SLI and the Center for the Study of Traumatic Encephalopathy (CSTE) at Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM). The initial registry members were twelve current and former professional athletes, including former NFL star Ted Johnson and current NHL player Noah Welch. The registry has since grown to 130 members, 80 professional and 50 amateur, as of June, 2009. In research conducted at the CSTE, 10 of 10 brains of deceased contact sport athletes, ranging in age of death from 18-80, have shown some degree of evidence of CTE.

SLI has formed a Military Advisory Board to assist in the program’s evolution. The initial board members include Governor Jesse Ventura, a former Navy SEAL, Brigadier General Richard Lynch, MC,USAR (Ret.), Captain David Gowel, Iraq War Veteran and Army Ranger, former Captain Thomas Scaife, USAR, and others. SLI will be partnering with other non-profits to assist in enabling research, including the Brain Injury Association of America and others to be announced soon.

Robert Stern, PhD, associate professor of Neurology, co-director of the CSTE, and co-director of the BUSM Alzheimer’s Disease Clinical and Research Program, said, “By studying large numbers of veterans throughout their lives, as well as examining brain tissue through the brain bank, we will be able to determine the specific consequences of military brain trauma, identify risk factors, and eventually help develop appropriate and effective treatments.”

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Sports Legacy Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation founded in 2007 to solve the sports concussion crisis. SLI is dedicated to education, prevention, treatment, and research on the effects of concussions and other brain injuries in athletes and the military. SLI partnered with Boston University School of Medicine to form the Center for the Study of Traumatic Encephalopathy in 2008.

The CSTE was created in 2008 as a collaborative venture between Boston University School of Medicine and Sports Legacy Institute (SLI). The mission of the CSTE is to conduct state-of-the-art research of Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy, including its neuropathology and pathogenesis, the clinical presentation and course, the genetics and other risk factors for CTE, and ways of preventing this cause of dementia.

Founded in 1980, the Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA) is the leading national organization serving and representing individuals, families and professionals who are touched by a life-altering, often devastating, traumatic brain injury (TBI). Together with its network of more than 40 chartered state affiliates, as well as hundreds of local chapters and support groups across the country, the BIAA provides information, education and support to assist the 3.17 million Americans currently living with traumatic brain injury and their families.