

Former NFL Pro Alex Smith Fears Concussions Could Cause Football “Existential Crisis”

(NAPS)—Alex Smith loves football. “Football is amazing. I think it’s the greatest team sport in America,” notes the former quarterback for the 49ers, Chiefs and Commanders. But Smith is worried about the future of football.

The Problem

A concussion sidelined Smith, ending his starting quarterback position with the San Francisco 49ers in November 2012. He clearly remembers the moment of impact and afterwards as he struggled with his vision, unable to focus correctly. “It was at Candlestick and it was an incredible day. Very sunny and bright,” he recalls. “I kept thinking my vision would get better and it didn’t.”

Smith felt recovered weeks later but was denied the opportunity of a lifetime: to play in Super Bowl XLVII. His concussion was a wake-up call. The NFL star realized how vulnerable he and his teammates were to brain injury caused by “the greatest team sport on the planet.” “It’s scary stuff for all football players,” he notes, “It’s a scary looming thing we confront every time we play.”

What horrifies Smith is that “there are no approved treatments, there are no approved tests that can definitively diagnose concussions. When it comes to concussion treatment,” he observes, “it’s the same as it was 20, 40, 50, 100 years ago.” Smith is troubled about players’ health, but he is also concerned about the millions of other Americans who get concussed. Every year, 7 to 21 million concussions occur in this country.

Especially worrying is the number of young people who experience concussion symptoms. As many as 3.8 million sports-related concussions occur annually among youth aged 18 years and younger.

“I can’t tell you how many parents come up to me to talk about their kids and their concussions. They ask me what they can do to ease their child’s pain. Do I tell them there’s nothing that can help?”

Smith points out that while football contributes to the alarming brain injury statistics, many young people get concussed playing other sports and doing other things young people like to do.

Participation in high school football has dropped in the USA as awareness about concussions has risen. While the NFL and others have added protocols and made helmets more effective in preventing skull fractures and reducing the force of an impact, they cannot stop concussions. Football is still dangerous. The sport could face what Smith calls an “existential crisis” as young athletes shift to other less violent sports leaving few if anyone on the gridiron.

“It’s just crazy that there have been no significant breakthroughs in concussion research...ever,” says Smith. “This is why I am working with Oxeia Biopharmaceuticals. I partnered with Oxeia to



Legendary quarterback and ESPN analyst Alex Smith has partnered with Oxeia Biopharmaceuticals to share his experience with concussions in hopes of advancing the science to treat brain injury.

be a part of the solution. I want to work with this company to see if we can find some of the answers to brain injury recovery. Let’s figure this out.”

There are currently no FDA-approved treatments for concussions, despite an estimated 1.4 to 4.2 million Americans suffering from often debilitating post-concussion symptoms that can last months or years after the initial injury.

An Answer

Smith sees concussion therapy as a real possibility. “I’m excited about what’s next but I know more people have to push for more medical innovation for brain injury. The NFL, the pharmaceutical companies and even football fans need to start demanding and investing in concussion treatments.”

What Else Is Being Done

Oxeia Biopharmaceuticals, a clinical-stage biotech company, is developing OXE103, a ghrelin-based therapy for persistent concussion symptoms. OXE103 showed promise in Oxeia’s Phase 2a pilot clinical trial with an 85% responder rate in patients receiving OXE103 compared to 33% with standard care alone. This was the first time any drug showed meaningful improvement in persistent concussion symptoms. The company is ready to move forward to Phase 2b trials.

What You Can Do

You can help find a solution. Oxeia launched a crowdfunding campaign on StartEngine to fund a Phase 2b trial.

Learn More

Learn more about Oxeia’s mission to bring the first FDA-approved treatment for persistent concussion symptoms to market. Visit <https://invest.oxeiabiopharma.com>.