

About Us

The Brain Injury Research Institute is a new center for the study of traumatic brain injuries and their prevention located on the campus of West Virginia University.

Its founding members include **Julian E. Bailes, MD**, Chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery at West Virginia University School of Medicine and former NFL and current NCAA team physician, **Bennet Omalu, MD**, a forensic neuropathologist who is Chief Medical Examiner for San Joaquin County, California and a professor at the University of California at Davis, and **Robert P. Fitzsimmons**, an attorney and expert in policy at Fitzsimmons Law Offices in Wheeling, WV.

The purpose of the Institute is to study the short and long-term impact of brain injuries in order to better understand the impact of concussions, the development of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) and its psychosocial effects on individuals' lives. Research indicates a clear link between brain injuries and various debilitating neurological disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

Our work aims to educate medical participants, public policy experts, and the public on the profound consequences and dangers of concussions – whether in athletics, the military, or other professions. The group hopes to establish protocol for the treatment of concussions and eventually help develop therapeutic interventions that can inhibit the progression of the disease and/or cure it. The Institute has also established a brain and tissue bank. Research often helps the medical community in its effort to find cures for diseases such as CTE.

Meet Our Founding Members

Since 2002, the Brain Injury Research Institute physicians have collectively examined over twenty brains, including former NFL players Mike Webster, Justin Strzelczyk, Terry Long, and Andre Waters. They have also examined and diagnosed CTE in WWE wrestler Chris Benoit – in a much-publicized tragic case.

Dr. Bennet Omalu

Dr. Omalu was the first person to discover physical evidence linking football-related brain injury and dementia. He discovered the condition of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (commonly known as CTE) in 2002 in the brain of Hall of Fame Center for the Pittsburgh Steelers Mike Webster. He has studied, using detailed histological analysis, numerous brain specimens of contact sport athletes, finding extensive brain damage (tauopathy).

Dr. Julian Bailes

Dr. Bailes was the former team physician for the Pittsburgh Steelers and is presently the team physician for the West Virginia University Mountaineers football team. He has also been actively involved in the research and examinations done together with Dr. Omalu and is part of a group who has collected head injury data for the NFL, which is maintained at North Carolina University. He is the Medical Director of the Center for Study of Retired Athletes, based at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Kevin Guskiewicz, Ph.D. is the Director of the Center, which has been funded by the NFL Players Association and has conducted numerous studies on the health of retired NFL players.

Robert P. Fitzsimmons

A public policy expert, Mr. Fitzsimmons is a practicing attorney in Wheeling, WV. He has fought and won the only injury case against the NFL for football-related brain disability, that of former Pittsburgh Steelers player Mike Webster.