



Special points of interest:

- Concussion has historically been misunderstood.
- Big money in professional football has affected the true story.
- Researchers are now standing up to the NFL.
- It took an outsider to make the connection.

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HAPPY

NEW

YEAR!!!

OUTSIDERS EXPOSE DAMAGING TRUTH

This article is taken from the Boston Globe, Nov. 30th. The subject is becoming more and more pertinent and important:

In 2002, Dr. Bennet Omalu, a young pathologist from Nigeria working in the Allegheny County Medical Examiner's Office in Pennsylvania, performed an autopsy on Mike Webster, the retired legendary center of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Omalu had never heard of Webster. Then again, as journalist Jeanne Marie Laskas pointed out in a recent phone interview from her home in Pittsburgh, "He didn't really know what football was."

Laskas believes that Omalu's outsider status helped him pursue a truth the National Football League was slow to acknowledge: Playing football can cause brain damage. She first wrote about Omalu in a 2009 GQ article called "Game Brain." That article became the basis for a film called "Concussion," starring Will Smith as Omalu, to be released Dec. 25, and for Laskas's new book by the same name.

The youngest son of a government official, Omalu was born as his family fled their village during the Nigerian civil war in 1968. He completed his medical education at the University of Nigeria, but in 1994, disenchanted with the country's political situation, he immigrated to the United States. He did additional training in Seattle and

New York before signing on as a forensic pathologist in Pittsburgh.

In his autopsy of Webster, who was thought to have died of a heart attack, Omalu found that the brain at first looked normal. But he learned that Webster had behaved bizarrely in the last years of his life, and had often been homeless despite the assistance of friends and former team-mates, so he decided to take a closer look. Microscopically, he observed, Webster's brain resembled the brains of boxers suffering with dementia and psychiatric disorders after years in the ring. After performing autopsies on several other NFL retirees, Omalu concluded that football, like boxing, can cause a condition called chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE). Over a career, a player might experience the equivalent of thousands of car accidents, during which the brain is jostled within the skull, and for which a helmet offers **no protection.**

Research by Omalu, scientists at Boston University's CTE Center, (the Director, Dr. Robert Stern lives here in Needham) and others ultimately led thousands of former players and their families, including that of Junior Seau, who committed suicide in 2012 not long after ending his career with the Patriots to sue the NFL. The Patriots did not publicly acknowledge the connection between football and CTE until 2009, seven years

after Omalu first described it.

Despite the NFL's current protocol for diagnosing and managing concussions, players remain at risk.

As a result of increasing awareness of the potential hazards of playing football, enrollment in youth programs is down. But America's enthusiasm for the sport hasn't waned. "It's this conversation we keep almost having in America," Laskas said. "I liken it to tobacco, years back. You didn't want to quit smoking, so you didn't really want to know it was that bad. And, similar to tobacco, you have this billion dollar industry, the NFL, making sure you don't pay attention to it."

Laskas, like Omalu, is a bit of an outsider in relation to this story. "I'm not a sportswriter," she noted. She isn't even a lifelong football fan—though in Pittsburgh, she said, rooting for the Steelers is unavoidable." What attracted her to the story was the intriguing character of Omalu. The doctor's habit of speaking to his autopsy subjects and asking them for guidance is just one of his many quirks. Today, Omalu is chief medical examiner of San Joaquin County, CA, and a professor at University of CA, Davis School of Medicine. What's his reaction to "Concussion," the book and movie—not to mention a foundation started in his name at the Univ. of Pittsburgh, dedicated to research on CTE and brain injuries? "He's delighted"

GO SEE THE MOVIE!

JANUARY, 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	S
	Current events group at Sr. Center/ 10:30AM Jan 5,19, Feb. 2,16.	Creative writing group 10 AM: Sr. Center/ Jan 12,26, Feb. 9,23. Write your memoires!			1	2
3	4 11:30-2:30 / Sr. Center/Fitness Center open.	5 12:30: Bingo/ Chambers	6 9 AM-noon: Sr. Center/ Wellness clinic	7 2 PM: "A Year in Morocco" with Barry Pell; Sr.Center. Call 781-455-7555.	8 10:15 AM: Sr. Center; quilting.	9
10	11 11:30-2:30 / Sr. Center/Fitness Center open.	12 12:30: Bingo/ Chambers	13	14 Noon: Sr. Center/ free caption phone demo	15 10:15 AM: Sr. Center; quilting.	16
17	18 11:30-2:30: Sr. Center/Fitness Center open.	19 12:30: Bingo/ Chambers	20 1:30: Climate change presentation/ Sr. Center. Call 781-455-7555.	21 7:30: Board Meeting/Chambers	22 10:15 AM: Sr. Center; quilting. 1 PM: Movie/ Sr. Center; A Walk in the Woods	23
24	25 11:30-2:30: Sr. Center/Fitness Center open.	26 12:30: Bingo/ Chambers	27	28	29 10:15 AM: Sr. Center; quilting.	30/3

DEALING WITH CLIMATE CHANGE

Especially since we have just broken all heat records during the Christmas weekend, it is appropriate to quote from an article by Justin Gillis who wrote for the New York Times November 28th. He makes twelve points. Six will be included in this newsletter and six more next month.

1. **The planet has warmed by 1.7 degrees Fahrenheit since 1880.** This may sound low, but as an average over the surface of an entire planet, it is actually high. The heat accumulating in the Earth because of human emissions is roughly equal to the heat that would be released by 400,000 Hiroshima atomic bombs exploding across the planet every day. If emissions continue unchecked global warming could ultimately exceed 8 degrees Fahrenheit, which would transform the planet and undermine its capacity to support a large human population.
2. **For future generations, we are in big trouble:** The risks are much greater over the long run than over the next few decades. Over the coming 25 or 30 years, scientists say, the climate is likely to resemble that of today,

although gradually getting warmer. Longer term, the risks are profound. Scientists fear climate effects so severe that they might destabilize governments, produce waves of refugees, precipitate the sixth mass extinction of plants and animals in Earth's history, and melt the polar ice caps, causing the seas to rise high enough to flood most of the world's coastal cities.

3. What can an individual do?

Fly less, drive less, waste less. There are lots of simple ways to reduce your own carbon footprint. You can plug leaks in your home insulation to save power, install a smart thermostat, switch to more efficient light bulbs, turn off the lights in any room where you are not using them, drive fewer miles by consolidating trips or taking public transit, waste less food and eat less meat. Perhaps the biggest single thing individuals can do on their own is to take fewer airplane trips: just one or two fewer plane rides per year can save a much in emissions as all the other actions combined. In the end, though, experts do not believe the needed transformation in the energy system can happen without strong state and national policies. So

speaking up and exercising your rights as a citizen matters as much as anything else you can do.

4. What's the optimistic scenario? Several things have to break our way.

In the best case that scientists can imagine, several things happen: Earth turns out to be less sensitive to greenhouse gases than currently believed; plants and animals manage to adapt to the changes that have already become inevitable; human society develops much greater political will to bring emissions under control; major technological breakthroughs occur that help society both to limit emissions and to adjust to climate change. Scientists say the odds of all these things breaking our way are not very high. Global warming seems to be causing chaos in parts of the natural world already and that seems likely to get worse, not better.

5. What's the worst-case scenario? There are many.

Perhaps the greatest fear is a collapse of food production, accompanied by escalating prices and mass starvation. Another possibility would be a disintegration of the polar ice sheets, leading to fast-rising seas that would force people to abandon many of the world's

great cities and would lead to the loss of trillions of dollars worth of property and other assets. Scientists also worry about other wild-card scenarios like the predictable cycles of Asian monsoons becoming less reliable. Billions of people depend on monsoons to provide water for crops, so any disruptions would be catastrophic.

6. Will a tech breakthrough help us? Even Bill Gates says don't count on it, unless we commit the cash.

Even experts who are optimistic about technological solutions warn that current efforts are not enough. Spending on basic energy research is only a quarter to a third of the level that several in-depth reports have recommended. Bill Gates says we have to spend the money to make these things more likely to happen.

More next month!

EVENING OF JOY WAS JOYOUS

The Immigration Justice Task Force members plus many teachers of English as a Second Language joined their students and others who have immigrated from other parts of the world recently for a lively evening at the Grace Lutheran Church on Thursday, December 3rd. Seven countries were represented and aromatic dishes from all the areas represented. People took samples from all the tables, getting a fine tasting of the best from every culture. Two little girls and their mother were dressed

in Romanian costumes that were flattering, beautiful and colorful. Ruth Nieves and a friend plus her two children got everyone dancing the Zumba and doing it very well indeed. There was wonderful music and much happy conversation taking place.

The people of Needham Housing did not attend and they were very much missed. Perhaps in the spring they will make it.

Clark Taylor, the Chairman of the

Immigration Task Force, arrived early to set up tables and dishes. He missed a step in the front of the church and suffered a fracture of his hip and a broken wrist. He was taken by George Goneconto to the ER and therefore missed the event he had planned. He had written a large greeting to Zahra Haghghatjoo who was unable to attend. Everyone signed it and she was delighted when it was delivered to her. Best wishes for Clark's recovery. See you all next time





Needham Housing Authority

28 Captain Robert Cook Drive
Needham, MA 02494

Phone: 781-444-3011
Fax: 781-444-1089
E-mail: pkirk@needhamhousing.org

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COOKS UPDATE AND HOLIDAY NEWS

The last week of Cooks After School was busy with gifts for all the children plus holiday cookies and decorations. The program will resume on January 4th.

The Toys for Tots distribution took place on December 8th. Coffee and DD's pastries accompanied the "shopping event". Everyone was able to get four gifts for each child in the family. There were even a few left over which were delivered to the Community Council for their annual toy distribution on December 10th.

Cradles to Crayons came through with 30 orders requiring two trips to Brighton to pick them all up! One order was left unfilled but fortunately that happened to be a twin so the twin who got the order

was able to share his order with his brother. They'll share the other order when it comes!

Already Marjorie Dean of the Community Farm is planning the new garden for the spring. She has appointed Josie Dardinski as the student supervisor. Together they will rally the troops to help prepare the soil and clean up whatever is left from last fall. The season was very successful last year between the garden itself and the weekly deposit of fresh vegetables from the farm. Trader Joe's can't be forgotten either. **The residents of Seabeds and Cooks** are welcome to pick up food from TJ's every Tuesday throughout the year. The food is delivered to the Seabeds Community Room at about 9:30 AM on Tuesdays.



Santa gave much to
Toys for Tots!