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## Concussions lecture highlights 'silent epidemic' in sports

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On Aug. 26, Northern Highlands Regional High School, in conjunction with Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, hosted the first part of its 2010 Sports Education Lecture Series.

The lecture, called "Concussions: Signs, Symptoms and Effects," was led by Kessler employees Dr. Monique Tremaine, senior neuropsychologist for outpatient cognitive rehabilitation, and Julie Burhart-Crumby, clinical specialist and speech-language pathologist. The session was meant to educate students, as well as their parents and coaches, on what Tremaine called the "silent epidemic" of concussions in student-athletes.

According to Northern Highlands Superintendent John Keenan, the partnership between Kessler and the high school began when he reached out to see if there were any



volunteer opportunities for Northern Highlands students at the organization.

"This [lecture series] was an outgrowth of that relationship," he said, adding that it was important for the school's officials to provide information on these types of injuries to its student-athletes. "We're very excited to partner with them for this."

Northern Highlands Athletic Trainer Peter Koeniges said he sees "about 10 to 15" concussions per year with the school's athletes.

"It's definitely a problem that we have to deal with," Koeniges said. "The biggest thing is learning how to recognize it and how to treat it properly and being careful with their return."

Last week's session covered what Koeniges mentioned were the biggest concerns for school's athletic department, with Tremaine and Burhart-Crumby detailing the often subtle signs of concussions, as well as the protocol for having a student-athlete return

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to play.

Tremaine said that more than 400,000 high school athletes suffered concussions in the past year alone, and some of the signs include headaches, dizziness, nausea, confusion, amnesia, sensitivity to light and noise, visual blurriness and motor clumsiness. She added that many doctors who aren't specifically trained in this area may overlook subtle symptoms and may deem the student eligible to return to play when the athlete may have suffered a concussion that has gone undetected.

"If there is ever any question, get them to a specialist," she said.

Kessler, according to its website, "provides comprehensive physical medicine and rehabilitation programs" to those suffering from head injuries, as well as a host of other services, including both inpatient and outpatient programs at its West Orange, Saddle Brook and Chester campuses.

The organization will conduct three more seminars this fall on the Northern Highlands campus. "Repetitive Sports Injuries" will be held at 7 p.m. on Sept. 22; "ACL Injuries & Prevention" will be held at 7 p.m. on Oct. 20; and "Supplements and the High School Athlete" will be held at 7 p.m. on Dec 1.

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Registration is free for residents of the Northern Highlands School District. To register for any of the upcoming sessions, e-mail [rromano@selectmedicalcorp.com](mailto:rromano@selectmedicalcorp.com).

For more information on concussions, go to [cdc.gov/concussion/sports](http://cdc.gov/concussion/sports).

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