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Conference for Medical Professionals Presents Treatment Updates and Spotlights Concern for Injury Rates in Girls Sports

GREENWICH, CT – The ONS Foundation for Clinical Research and Education held its first professional medical conference on Saturday, October 3rd in the Noble Conference Center at Greenwich Hospital. Over 110 medical professionals including physicians, nurses, physician assistants, physical and occupational therapists, and trainers, filled the room to capacity to hear presentations by subspecialty trained physicians and a licensed physical therapist on the latest information on diagnosis, treatments and prevention of musculoskeletal conditions and injuries. In his opening remarks, Program Chairman Dr. Frank Ennis said the conference would be the first of many educational events to be presented by the ONS Foundation.

Following a warm welcome by President of Greenwich Hospital Mr. Frank Corvino, the program got underway. The doctors' presentations touched on a wide range of topics related to the latest innovations in orthopedic and neurosurgical medicine. Doctors talked about platelet-rich plasma, the latest materials and alignment techniques in joint replacement, the importance of listening closely to patients and new treatments that enhance human biology as the way of the future. Many of the doctors' talks focused on advances in minimally invasive surgeries, which have had a dramatic impact on surgical outcomes for patients in recent years.

Noted New York Times Magazine writer and author Michael Sokolove was the conference keynote speaker. A devoted sports lover, he is a believer in the physical and emotional benefits of youth sports. However, he feels there is currently an unacceptable level of sports injuries, particularly for girls. Most alarming is the incidence of torn ACLs. "Girls suffer two-to-ten times greater number of ACL injuries than boys," said Sokolove. "This is a great threat to girls' sports. The numbers are staggering. Most girls who play sports have either had a sports injury or have had a friend suffer a sports injury." A large number of these are ACL injuries. He believes ACL injuries have become normalized, almost accepted, that

surgeries are almost routine. “But surgery has risks. It’s painful and there are potential lifelong implications.” He referred to Amy Steadman, a girl he describes in his book, *“Warrior Girls: Protecting Our Daughters Against the Injury Epidemic in Women’s Sports”*. Amy grew up a tomboy and was a promising athlete. She tore her ACL during sports and had it repaired but ruptured and repaired it again three subsequent times. She rehabbed aggressively and returned to playing sports but was reinjured over and over again. By the time Sokolove met Amy, her sports career was finished. She walked crookedly, had multiple physical problems and would probably need a knee replacement in her 30s.

In Sokolove’s book, he tries to understand why this is happening to girls. “Boys get bigger and stronger as they mature, even if they aren’t athletic. Girls don’t get appreciably stronger during adolescence due to increasing levels of estrogen. “They have to work hard to build muscle. Biomechanically, they function differently too.” Another risk factor, Sokolove explains is that girls are tougher than boys. Not pain tougher- something different. “It was found in some military research on basic training that more women get injured than men,” he said. “But the research showed that it takes more to knock women out of the service than it does men.” Trainers have also told him, it’s harder to get girls who have been injured off the field than boys. “Many girls who begin playing sports at eight years of age are hurting all the time by the time they are twelve.”

“Today, girls’ sports are manufacturing injuries.” Girl athletes are under so much pressure to perform but many trainers don’t know how to train them to be safe. He thinks that sports specific strengthening and conditioning programs like the one ONS Physical Therapy and the ONS Foundation offer, are very effective and should be adopted by school athletic programs. Research shows ACL injury rates improve significantly when girls participate in these kinds of programs. He believes that coaches are given too much latitude and almost certainly don’t have experience in this area. Sokolove feels it is time for frank discussion about the gender differences. “Girls and boys should each have access to sports activity but they need to be trained differently so that they can enjoy sports equally.”

Dr. Paul Sethi said the ONS Foundation will hold the conference for medical professionals annually in October.

The ONS Foundation for Clinical Research and Education, Inc. is a registered not-for-profit, 501(c)3 organization devoted to understanding the causes and optimal treatments of orthopaedic injuries and musculoskeletal conditions. The ONS Foundation, in alliance with Greenwich Hospital, strives to improve standards of excellence for the treatment of musculoskeletal disorders through clinical research, physician and patient education, and community outreach programs. The Foundation is located at 6 Greenwich Office Park, 10 Valley Drive, Greenwich, CT. For more information visit www.ONS-Foundation.org.
