



Hospitals donate \$10,000 for high school players' initial concussion tests

By **Anthony J. Machcinski/The Jersey Journal**

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As professional sports leagues wrestle with ways to deal with and prevent concussions, three local hospitals are trying to address the issue at the high school level.

Christ Hospital in Jersey City, Hoboken University Medical Center, and Bayonne Medical Center announced yesterday that they have donated \$10,000 to Cleared to Play, a nonprofit organization that raises awareness of concussion prevention and treatment.

“This check will pay for all the baseline testing for 5,000 athletes in Hudson County,” said Cleared to Play co-founder Dr. Sean Lager.



Paul Walker, President/CEO of University Medical Center, speaks at the news conference while, from left, Sean Lager, Mark Spektor, the President/CEO of Bayonne Medical Center, and Peter Kelly, the President/CEO of Christ Hospital, hold a check for \$10,000 written out to Cleared to Play at the Hoboken University Medical Center.

The organization uses Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing (ImPACT) software, a computerized concussion evaluation system currently being used in the NFL and collegiate athletics.

ImPACT uses a preseason, baseline test that analyzes a player's brain function. If the athlete suffers a head injury, they are given another test to determine whether or not their brain function was affected by the injury. According to Lager, insurance companies will cover the cost of the post-concussion test, but will not pay for the initial baseline test.

Testing was done in August at Union City High School, where more than 1,200 student-athletes from across the county were tested.

“This is a subject near and dear to my heart,” said Dr. Mark Spector, president and CEO of Bayonne Medical Center. “The threat of a head injury in children is significant and this is a great first step to help prevent that. The initial injury may not be bad, but if they get hit again, it could kill them.”

According to Lager, the organization has treated more than 100 athletes for concussion symptoms in the past 18 months. The Centers for Disease Control estimated that 2 million to 3 million athletes suffer from concussions yearly.

“Brains of children 21 and under are the most susceptible to head injury,” Lager said. “If the NFL gets the gold standard in concussion testing, then high school athletes should get the platinum standard.”

Testing is available at all three hospitals and is free to all Hudson County athletes. For more information, visit the Cleared to Play.Org, Inc. website at www.clearedtoplay.org.