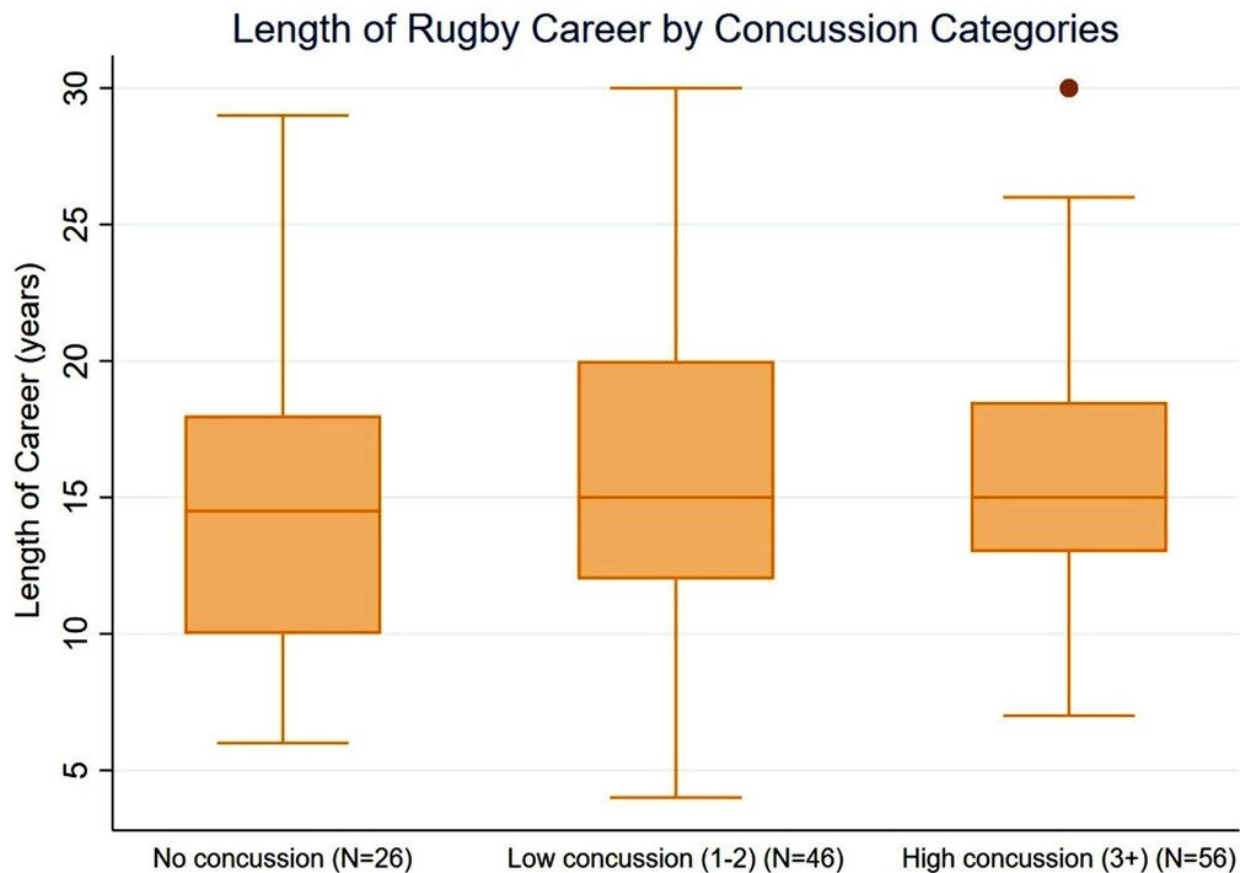


Neither concussion or career length in rugby linked with memory and thinking problems

October 20 2021



Categories of concussions by length of career in the BRAIN Study (N = 143).
Credit: DOI: 10.1002/alz.12455

UK researchers have published findings showing that a history of

concussion in former elite amateur rugby players is not linked with memory and thinking in later life. The journal *Alzheimer's & Dementia* published the results today (Wednesday 20 October).

Researchers looked at 146 former elite male rugby union players over the age of 50. The average length of the players' careers was just over 15 years.

The volunteers self-reported the number of concussions they received during their careers.

The research team then looked at the study participants' scores on a measure of [memory](#) and thinking, called the PACC.

Researchers found nearly 80% of the rugby players studied had experienced [concussion](#). However, the researchers found no link between a concussive event and performance on the memory and thinking tests.

However, in a smaller sub-group of participants aged 80 years and over, those who reported more than three concussions had worse cognition than those who hadn't experienced concussion.

Dr. Susan Kohlhaas, director of research at Alzheimer's Research UK, said, "Collisions in sport is an area of increasing scrutiny for public health, however relatively little is known about the long-term impact of concussions received in professional rugby union.

"Findings from this study of former amateur elite rugby union players adds to our understanding of the risks involved with sports. While we know exercise is good for our brain health, certain sports involving high energy collisions have been linked to risk of long-term neurological problems.

"There hasn't been enough long-term research involving ex-[rugby players](#) for us to know what specific risks might be associated with a rugby career. Further research in a larger number of volunteers is required to establish if any link between concussions sustained on the rugby field and memory problems in later life exists.

"While the game of [rugby](#) has evolved over a number of years, so has the approach to managing concussions, and creating a safer game should continue to be an important for [public health](#) goal for all.

"Funding for dementia research lags behind funding for other conditions and we need to see this change. Only with increased funding for research into dementia will we be able to help reduce the [number](#) of [dementia](#) cases."

More information: Valentina Gallo et al, Concussion and long-term cognitive function among rugby players—The BRAIN Study, *Alzheimer's & Dementia* (2021). [DOI: 10.1002/alz.12455](https://doi.org/10.1002/alz.12455)

Provided by Alzheimer's Research UK

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