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**ASSOCIATION OF RINGSIDE PHYSICIANS RELEASES CONSENSUS STATEMENT ON THE USE OF NEUROIMAGING IN COMBAT SPORTS**

Madison, WI – The Association of Ringside Physicians (ARP) is proud to announce the publication of a consensus statement establishing guidelines for the use of neuroimaging technology in combat sports athletes. This statement, published in the June 2022 issue of *The Physician and Sports Medicine*, marks the first recommendation of its kind to be issued by a medical or combat sports organization.

“Neuroimaging can be helpful in identifying factors that may increase an athlete’s risk of injury,” said Dr. John Neidecker, ARP President and one of the statement’s primary authors. “Professional boxing, kickboxing, and MMA all carry substantial risk of traumatic brain injury, and neuroimaging can improve athlete safety by identifying warning signs that indicate the presence of or susceptibility to traumatic brain injury.”

Recent events have reignited mainstream and medical community concern about the safety of combat sports. In 2019, two fighters, Maxim Dadshev and Hugh Alfredo Santillan, died within the space of a week from injuries sustained during professional boxing matches. In early 2022, the ARP published a [study](#) of combat sports fatalities that aimed to identify risk factors and facilitate the ongoing evaluation of trends in combat sports safety. The new consensus statement on the use of neuroimaging represents next steps in improving safety for combat sports athletes.

Although some jurisdictions in the U.S. already require neuroimaging of athletes, frequency and type of imaging varies by jurisdiction. “Subdural hematoma is the most common cause of boxing related mortality. Standardized guidelines could protect the athlete’s health and safety, both during and after their professional careers,” said Dr. Nitin K Sethi, the statement’s primary author. “This statement really represents a new frontier in improving athlete safety in combat sports.”

The [full statement](#) is published in the June 2022 issue of *The Physician and Sports Medicine* and is authored by ARP Board Member, Dr. Nitin Sethi, MD, MBBS, FAAN, and ARP President, Dr. John Neidecker, DO, ATC, FAOASM. The ARP’s guidelines recommend the following:

- 1. Neuroimaging should be used on all professional athletes prior to licensure.** Pre-licensure imaging can serve as a baseline for future comparison, identify pre-existing structural abnormalities that pose a risk for brain injury, and identify evidence of prior structural injury that may indicate a predisposition for the expression of late-life conditions including CTE, Parkinson’s disease, and dementia.
- 2. Neuroimaging is recommended for all professional athletes at a minimum frequency of every three years.** More frequent imaging is recommended for athletes with a history of injury or who are at higher risk for injury.

3. **Neuroimaging abnormalities should be managed on a case-by-case basis.** Aneurysms, arteriovenous malformations (AVM) and large sub-arachnoid cysts should preclude an athlete from competing. All other abnormalities found on neuroimaging should be handled on an individual basis.
4. **Neuroimaging should be used in the aftermath of a bout in which an athlete has sustained significant or suspected head trauma.** This imaging can be used to rule out acute life-threatening traumatic brain injury.

The ARP is an advisory body, and these guidelines are recommendations designed to assist ringside physicians, combat sports athletes, trainers, promoters, sanctioning bodies, governmental bodies, and others in decision-making. They may be adopted, modified, or rejected according to clinical needs and constraints and are not intended to replace local commission laws, regulations, or policies.

“It is recommended that the above consensus guidelines be debated vigorously by ringside physicians and the larger scientific community in conjunction with professional combat sport’s governing bodies,” says Dr. Neidecker. “We believe that the observance of these guidelines will go a long way to improve the health and safety of professional combat sports athletes.”

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### **About the Association of Ringside Physicians**

The ARP is a membership-driven nonprofit organization that protects athletes worldwide by advocating for best practices in combat sports safety and by providing ongoing medical education to the broader boxing and mixed martial arts communities. Members include physicians, allied healthcare professionals, students, members of governmental commissions, sanctioning bodies, promoters, trainers, and others involved in providing for the health, safety, and welfare of those participating in both amateur and professional combat sports.