Children's Hospital Boston and CIMIT Set Saturday Workshop: Preventing Knee Injuries in Young Female Athletes

Boston: January 5, 2006 **–** A clinic to help young athletes reduce knee injuries is being offered – without cost – to all coaches, athletic trainers, and physical education teachers on Saturday, January 7 from 8AM to noon at Chapel Hill-Chauncy Hall School, Beaver Gym. Children's Hospital Boston, Division of Sports Medicine, with CIMIT, is organizing a half-day seminar to teach coaches and athletic team trainers how to incorporate this injury prevention program into their pre-season regimen for next spring. CIMIT is a Boston-based consortium that brings together clinicians, scientists, and engineers to solve complex medical problems using novel technology and therapy.

Young female athletes at risk:
According to Martha Murray, MD, who is spearheading the clinic, "More than 200,000 Americans suffer tears to the Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) every year. Female athletes are about 5 times more likely to tear the ACL than male athletes in sports such as soccer. These injuries are devastating and often prevent athletes from participating in their sports for more than a year after."

Pre-season conditioning:
Research has shown that six weeks of a pre-season conditioning program can significantly decrease serious knee injuries. In conjunction with the orthopedic surgeons in the Sports Medicine Division at Children's Hospital Boston, physical therapists from the hospital, Sports and Physical Therapy Associates and JumpStart Physical Therapy have modified this program to accommodate the needs of the middle school and high school age athlete. The program focuses on strengthening, flexibility, and conditioning as well as balance work –features found to be important in significantly reducing serious knee injuries in collegiate athletes.

Dr. Martha Murray – Innovative treatment design:
Dr. Murray is involved in prevention, treatment, and innovation of new ideas to repair painful ACL injuries. Traditional treatment of ACL injuries typically involves limiting activities, bracing, exercises and even surgery to replace the torn ligament. Treatment can be prolonged, altering the athlete's life for months or even years.

With initial and continued funding from CIMIT, and funding from the National Institutes of Health, the Orthopaedic Research and Education Foundation, and the National Football League, Dr. Murray is conducting research into finding a better "fix" than the traditional surgery which replaces the torn ligament with a graft of tendon. Using novel technology, she and her team are working to find a way to repair the injury via two small incisions, using a camera to view the tear and a "gun" to squirt in a gel that can stimulate healing of the torn ligament. Her group is also working on various enhancements to the gel in an effort to speed the healing process—since, for many young athletes, the sooner they can back to sports, the better. It is hoped this new treatment will be available within two years.

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