



Former Bengals great advising on blood test for brain disorder linked to football

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Former Cincinnati Bengal and NFL broadcaster Solomon Wilcots will lead a group of retired football players serving as advisers for a health care firm's study of a blood test to detect and monitor a degenerative brain disorder.

Wilcots, 53, a Bengals defensive back for four seasons who last year was ranked No. 40 of the team's top 50 players of all time, will lead a Players Council created by Exosome Sciences Inc. as part of a biomarker study related to chronic traumatic encephalopathy.

Also known as CTE, the disorder is commonly found in athletes [as well as military veterans](#) and others with a history of repeated impact to the head that can result in concussions. Such trauma can cause progressive degeneration of the brain tissue, including the build-up of an abnormal form of a protein called tau.

CTE can result in confusion, impaired judgment, impulse-control problems, aggression, depression, memory loss and eventually progressive dementia, according to Exosome Sciences.

"Members of the Players Council will provide input on how best to engage with former NFL players, as well as serve as local advocates for the study," Wilcots said. "These members have volunteered to share and distribute educational information through their social platforms. We believe this is the first step in tackling brain health issues for all athletes."

A Bengal from 1987 to 1990, Wilcots worked as a TV sports anchor for Cincinnati's TV station WLWT (Channel 5) from 1994 to 2003. He was a color commentator on NFL games broadcast from CBS from 2001 until last year.

Wilcots now works for the Russo Partners public relations firm in New York, whose clients include Exosome Sciences' parent company, Aethlon Medical Inc. (Nasdaq: AEMD).

The study will involve retired NFL players, who are at high risk of CTE, to potentially detect and monitor the disorder in living people. Currently, CTE usually can be diagnosed only by examining the brain tissue of someone who has died.

The biomarker study will involve up to 200 people. "If fully enrolled, the study would be the largest to date involving former NFL players," according to Exosome Sciences.

The study will also enroll people who didn't participate in activities that involve repetitive head trauma.

The sample collection will be conducted in collaboration with [Kendall Van Keuren-Jensen](#), co-director of the Phoenix-based Translational Genomics Research Institute's Center for Noninvasive Diagnostics for biomarker discovery projects.

The goal is to further validate a CTE biomarker candidate known as plasma exosomal tau, or a TauSome. The biomarker was previously studied as part of the first National Institutes of Health-funded CTE research program, which was managed by the Boston University CTE Center.

In addition to studying the biomarker in CTE, Exosome Sciences plans to investigate the potential for TauSome plasma levels to serve as a candidate biomarker to monitor Alzheimer's disease and other neurological tauopathies, which are disease conditions that involve the abnormal aggregation of tau protein in the brain.

I previously reported on how concern about football-related concussions prompted sports medicine specialists at the University of Cincinnati to undertake research to make the game of football safer.

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<https://www.bizjournals.com/cincinnati/news/2018/03/22/former-bengals-great-advising-onblood-test-for.html>