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Association of Ringside Physicians Consensus Statement On Medical Clearance of the Older Fighter in Professional Combat Sports

The Association of Ringside Physicians (ARP), an international, non-profit organization dedicated to the health and safety of the boxer and mixed martial arts athlete, has released a consensus statement on evaluation of the older fighter in professional combat sports as follows:

The Association of Ringside Physicians recognizes the desire of some individuals over 40 years of age to participate in combat sports. Such a choice, and more importantly, any subsequent decision to grant a license to a given individual, must be fully informed as there are inherent risks associated with the combination of the natural aging process and the potential for a less favorable outcome following head trauma in the older athlete.

While there are, at present, no conclusive scientific studies to support these axiomatic beliefs, they are based upon the collective knowledge and experience of Association of Ringside Physicians members, experienced observers of combat sports, and physician examiners of those who participate in combat sports for many decades.

Accordingly, individuals 40 years of age and older should be subject to the following testing in addition to all other routine pre-fight medical testing required by any jurisdiction or tribal athletic commission prior to being granted a license to participate in combat sports:

Initial testing should include:

- Magnetic Resonance Angiogram (MRA) of Brain

Annual testing should include the following:

- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) of the Brain without contrast
- Electrocardiogram (EKG)
- Cardiac testing that provides both myocardial perfusion and echocardiographic structural assessment. An exercise stress echocardiogram is the recommended method. However, a combination of an echocardiogram in addition to another form of cardiac stress testing may be acceptable.
- Annual formal neurocognitive testing, with a notation of any deterioration from the baseline (first) assessment
- Blood work including a complete blood count (CBC) and complete metabolic panel (CMET) which includes hepatic tests, blood urea nitrogen, creatinine and glucose.
- Ophthalmologic eye exam with pupil dilation and retinal examination

If any of these test results are abnormal at the outset or subsequently suggest deterioration in health status, consideration should be given to the license being denied, suspended or revoked.

For more about the ARP visit the website at www.associationofringsidephysicians.org.

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For further information, please contact:

Dr. Ray Monsell, Chairman
ray147@talktalk.net

Dr. Joseph Estwanik, President
ringsidedoc@ymail.com