

# Former Geneva Boxer's Message: Be 100% Honest when Dealing with Concussions

Former middle weight boxer Ray Ciancaglini knows the risks that concussions pose to athletes, and with the help of Dr. Jason Feinberg, Finger Lakes Health's Vice President of Medical Affairs and Chief Medical Officer, he's taking his message on the road. The two are educating high school and college students about the dangers of not addressing concussions properly, which can lead to Second Impact Syndrome (SIS).

SIS can occur when someone has sustained a head injury, then sustains a second head injury before symptoms have cleared from the first. Many times this occurs because the athlete has returned to competition before his or her first injury symptoms resolve. Parents and athletes may not realize that days or weeks may

be needed before a concussion is healed. When Ciancaglini suffered his first concussion, he felt something was wrong, but the boxing veterans he was surrounded by at Singers Gym in Buffalo told him it was just part of the game and that he'd need to learn to "work through it."

"They weren't giving me bad advice," he said. "They just didn't know any better back then."

Today Ciancaglini suffers from Dementia Pugilistica (Boxer's Syndrome); Parkinson's tremors; dementia, including paranoia and seclusion; insomnia; and constant headaches, all due to SIS.

Medical advances now show that one can heal from a single concussion, but it's when a person suffers a second concussion, or "second impact," before properly healing from the first, that the real damage can occur.

"I wouldn't be here today talking about concussions if I had addressed my first concussion properly," Ciancaglini said.

He tells young people to be honest about their symptoms with their coaches, trainers, and parents after suffering a head injury.

"I address 100% honesty with the kids I educate," he said. "They must be honest about their symptoms on the initial head injury to get properly evaluated. They must be 100% honest in rehab to prevent a relapse, and then 100% honest about their symptoms before returning to play to prevent SIS."

In 1999, Ciancaglini's neurologist, Dr. Heidi Schwarz, suggested he meet Dr. Feinberg, an internal medicine physician.

