

# *The Brain Game*



*Neuropsychologist Dr. Tony Strickland is revolutionizing the celerity of concussion and other brain trauma evaluations through his dual businesses Nexus Triage and the Center of Post-Concussion Syndrome and PTSD Treatment.*

From the defined lines of athletic fields to navigating the daily game of life, Dr. Tony Strickland is at the center of the huddle when it comes to understanding, assessing and treating the body's most powerful muscle.

A master of the brain behavior relationships, Dr. Strickland is among the nation's most respected clinical neuropsychologists. His penchant for smart business is not so shabby either.

An Associate Professor of Neurology at UCLA's David Geffen School of Medicine from 1999-2018, Dr. Strickland is a self-described "serial entrepreneur." His complimentary businesses – Nexus Triage and the Center of PCS (Post-Concussion Syndrome) and PTSD Treatment – are both innovating

and revolutionizing the convenience and speed of concussion and other brain trauma assessment.

The bona fides behind the endeavors read longer than a list of movie credits, an analogy apt, perhaps, as the 2015 film, *Concussion*, put the subject of head injuries at the forefront of the national stage while earning Will Smith a Golden Globe nod for his portrayal of Dr. Bennet Omalu, who is credited with discovering chronic traumatic encephalopathy in football players.

Further segue from drama to reality finds Dr. Julian Bailes (played by Alec Baldwin in the film), serving as Chief Medical Officer for Nexus Triage and the



Consulting Neurosurgeon for the Center for PCS and PTSD.

Dr. Strickland's journey of the brain game may have not graced the silver screen yet, but has instead put him in the starring role of real-life evaluation and treatment. A key figure in contributing an evaluation network for the NFL's class action \$1 billion concussion settlement of 2016, he has served as both a designated plaintiff and defense expert for many of the country's largest brain injury cases that have gone to trial.

While Dr. Strickland – a member of the Pop Warner Medical Advisory Board – finds pause in the subsequent, trickle-down descent in youth contact sports' participation as a result of both the settlement and the film, he ultimately sees the spotlight as a crucial learning moment.

"It was an overwhelmingly positive outcome, in the sense that individuals across the lifespan gained a better understanding of concussions and what the symptoms are," he says. "And, through this process, more and more stakeholders – parents, coaches, teachers, administrators – became invested and galvanized in understanding the basic symptoms, so that they can help intervene in somebody who is potentially symptomatic."

On his own field, the good doctor experienced a personal and professional contest of comprehension. "Our business really learned a big lesson in the logistics and convenience needed when treating retired NFL players," he says.

Chairman and CEO of the Center (established in 2005), and founder and CEO of Nexus Clinical Solutions, Dr. Strickland recognized the demand for remote doctor's visits long before the times COVID-19 found patients clamoring for such an option. In 2018, his creation of Nexus Triage ([nexustriage.com](http://nexustriage.com)) proved a prescient pivot in online assessments.

"It's a platform that we launched, fortunately well ahead of our current pandemic, and the result of decades and decades of working with patients suffering from head trauma and athletes across the lifespan of youth, prep, intercollegiate and professional sports," he says.

**T**he proprietary process presented by Nexus Triage begins with an online, neurobehavioral assessment, before the patient has a remote visit with a board-certified neurologist or neuropsychologist to undergo behavioral observations and quantitative test results. A full diagnostic report is then generated and results are delivered within 72 hours.



"Traditionally, when people got injured, they'd make an appointment, they'd drive to our clinic through challenging traffic, they'd pay to park and they'd sit in the doctor's office," he says. "All told, considering the assessment time, they'd be in the office anywhere from 30-minutes to much longer. And then they'd drive back home through the same traffic and await results."

**E**videncing his bedside and virtual manner, Dr. Strickland's treatment involves the virtue of actually listening to his patients. "People want to have their evaluations wherever they may be," he says. "I've reflected on this – *and we've listened*. We've listened to patients and we've utilized analytics from a partner Sales Force, and what we've learned is that patients don't want to go through all those logistics. We've developed the technologies, the best-in-class tele-NeuroHealth platform, and we've integrated our brain function assessment into this platform – and it's all driven by the consumer."

The streamlined process has cut to the core of the modern-day consumer's expectations for convenience across all levels of commerce, industry and health care. "In fact, we've learned that patients don't even want to pick up the phone to call the doctor," he says. "People want to select their doctors on the smart phone; people want to make appointments on their smart phone; people want to be evaluated through this medium and they want their test results through a mobile device."

Additionally, if not utmost, the Nexus Triage process cuts through the medical ether, affording patients faster and more efficient care along a critical timeline. "It allows an individual to be evaluated in close chronological proximity to the injury, providing individuals the help they may need as early on in the process as possible. And, especially during this pandemic, we've been able to persist and even grow when other face-to-face clinical encounters were shut down."

**T**he growth comes not merely from assessment. After completing a Nexus Triage evaluation that provides diagnostic impressions and treatment recommendations, the virtual baton is passed to the Center of PCS and PTSD Treatment ([concussiontreatment.com](http://concussiontreatment.com)) to provide next steps of expert care.

"Patients need help with treatment for anxiety, de-

pression, headaches, cognitive rehabilitation and related symptoms," Dr. Strickland says. "The Center – again, by listening to the consumer – provides the patient with a remote solution. We treat virtually, from the comfort of one's own home."

Of course, his mind meld isn't simply a matter of waiting for the virtual phone to ring. As complement to his quarter century serving as an expert witness for plaintiff and defense cases both civil and criminal, his outreach to the legal community is a key chapter in narrating protection of patient care – and costs.

"I realized that there's a mass tort every day. In California alone, there are approximately 15,000 automobile accidents a day, pre-COVID. And, about 10-15% of these involve head or neck injuries," he says. "The uniqueness of this, from the time I conceptualized the opportunity, is that from the time the patient is injured, historically, their entire medial journey was controlled by their attorney. We've now shifted a portion of our outreach to the entire legal community, in attempting to determine whether there's any active change in their client. Lawyers can see a cast on a broken arm; they can't see, nor can they appreciate, the profound cloud of concussion hovering over the patient's head."

The revolutionized, inclusive process makes all parties better informed. "At Nexus, we illuminate that cloud, and allow one to quantitate the degree of impairment," he says. "Then, the attorney can make an informed decision about the presence or absence of impairment and be able to advocate regarding the consequences or damages associated with the injury."

Looking ahead, Dr. Strickland sees an augmented sales force reaching out to over 40,000 lawyers and firms across the nation. "We're going to extend our story, which I believe is very unique," he says of his playbook.

"We, of course, had no idea COVID was going to come, but it's found us well positioned to expand our evaluations and diagnostic abilities with Nexus Triage. Right now, we're operating our virtual work in California and in states throughout the southwest; but, ultimately, this will be a nationwide solution." — By Judd Spicer, Senior Writer, California Business Journal.

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