

## **LAYA HEALTHCARE AND ROB KEARNEY LAUNCH 'HEAD ON CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME'**

***Laya healthcare invests €100,000 in programme to screen 1,350 amateur Leinster rugby club players***

**16<sup>TH</sup> February 2016:** Laya Healthcare, with Leinster full-back Rob Kearney, today launched its HEAD ON Concussion Management Programme. The programme, which is being launched in association with Leinster Rugby, is the largest concussion screening to be rolled out in Ireland.

The HEAD ON Concussion Management Programme will deliver 1,350 baseline screenings to amateur rugby players aged over 16 years from Leinster clubs, free of charge. A 20% discount on the screening is also available to all other Irish rugby clubs.

Laya healthcare is investing €100,000 in the initiative, the first major public health programme as part of laya healthcare's Health & Wellness Partnership with Leinster Rugby. To date, more than eight million people worldwide have been screened using the technology behind laya healthcare's concussion management programme.

Leinster full-back Kearney, said: "There has been a lot of talk around the issue of concussion recently and it is something that is taken very seriously within the sport. While the incidence of reported concussion is on the up, much of this can be put down to the general increase in awareness around the problem, which is a good thing in my view. We have excellent return to play protocols which has really helped the game. Education is key to helping prevent long-term effects of concussion and being able to recognise the symptoms of suspected concussion is hugely important. Players, coaches and parents need to understand that if there is any doubt, players should rest and not take any unnecessary risks.

"The launch today of laya healthcare's 'HEAD ON Concussion Management Programme' is a significant initiative for the amateur game. As professional players, we have access to the best medical support but it's fantastic that rugby players at amateur level will now have access to free screenings and follow-up screenings if needed. I would urge coaches across the province to make sure they have booked their team in for a screening", Kearney urged.

Dr. Ciaran Cosgrave, Head Doctor with Leinster Rugby, highlights that concussion can happen at any age, particularly in high-impact sports. He said: "While it is difficult to stop incidents of concussion from happening, we do have protocols in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the players and it is hugely important that anyone who suffers a suspected concussion follows these protocols before returning to play."

The testing carried out as part of laya healthcare's HEAD ON Concussion Management Programme is clinically led and has been widely used and endorsed by sporting organisations from around the world including the IRFU and NFL.

"There is growing awareness and concern about the potential long-term physical and cognitive impact of concussion in rugby and other contact sports," said D.O. O'Connor, Deputy Managing Director with laya healthcare. "While professional rugby players have access to expert knowledge and experienced backroom medical teams, we want to take this opportunity to extend the awareness and understanding of concussion, particularly repeated concussions, among younger players and those playing at amateur level. It's vital that players, parents and coaches understand the signs and

symptoms of concussion. At laya healthcare we are pursuing a proactive approach to managing and reducing the risk of sports-related concussion especially among amateur and youth players.”

Dr. Cosgrave points out the risks of overlooking a suspected concussion: “Ignoring the signs and symptoms of concussion could result in a serious brain injury or death and providing players, parents and coaches with simple tips and advice is key to growing awareness and understanding of concussion. We welcome laya healthcare’s HEAD ON screening initiative and look forward to working with them in rolling it out to youth rugby teams.”

Registration for the HEAD ON Concussion Management Programme is simple and free of charge for rugby clubs in Leinster. Simply call our Freephone number 1800 844 864, email [headonconcussion@layahealthcare.ie](mailto:headonconcussion@layahealthcare.ie) or go online to [layahealthcare.ie/HeadOn](http://layahealthcare.ie/HeadOn). Baseline screenings will be rolled out in March 2016, with follow-up screenings available to players if required. Laya healthcare is also offering a 20 per cent discount on the cost of screenings for any other Irish rugby clubs outside Leinster.