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NEWSLETTER · IN CONVERSATION WITH SHARMILA HUME

The injury no one names

Sharmila Hume on the overlooked link between head injury and men's mental health, the Headstrong campaign born from losing her brother, and why some symptoms have physical roots we walk past.

This piece discusses suicide, brain injury and road-traffic accidents. If that's difficult right now, it's completely fine to stop here — support resources are listed at the end.

This is a personal episode, and a careful one. Sharmila Hume — known to colleagues as the 'Biomedic Detective' — works with people whose bodies have stopped cooperating and who've been told it's all in their heads. After losing her brother, Arnie, to suicide, she turned that work toward a specific, under-discussed idea: that repeated head injury can quietly reshape a person's mental health for years, especially in boys and men.



So many of these men were never told they'd had a brain injury at all.

— Sharmila Hume, on Pharma Prescribed

What Concussion showed her

The turning point she describes is watching the film *Concussion* — the story of the research into repeated head trauma in American football. It gave her language for what she'd suspected about her brother, whose long-term brain injury had never been named. The research she found linked repeated head injury to consequences that can be devastating: derailed lives, broken relationships and raised suicide risk. She now works with athletes, and campaigns — through Headstrong — for this to be taken seriously in sport.

Injury you can't see

Her wider argument, made cautiously here, is that damage to the brain's blood vessels — whether from a blow or, she suggests, from viral illness — can show up not as an obvious wound but as low mood, exhaustion, short temper and poor decisions. Whatever one makes of the specifics, the practical takeaway is humane: when someone's behaviour changes after a head injury or a serious illness, it deserves curiosity rather than judgement.

Why it belongs on a pharma podcast

Sharmila's practice sits outside conventional medicine, and I'd encourage listeners to weigh her methods for themselves. But the awareness she's driving — that head injury is a genuine, under-recognised factor in men's mental health — is one the evidence increasingly supports, and one worth amplifying.

If you need support

If any of this is close to home, these are good places to start.

Samaritans — for anyone struggling to cope

Call 116 123 free, any time, day or night (UK & ROI), or email jo@samaritans.org.

Headway — the brain injury association

Information and support after brain injury at headway.org.uk.

In an emergency

If someone's life is at immediate risk, call 999.



Listen to the full episode

Sharmila Hume on Pharma Prescribed — at pharmaprescribed.com
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Sharmila Hume *is a practitioner and founder of the Headstrong campaign, working at the intersection of male health, brain injury and prevention.*