

Tulane's PACT clinic celebrates first anniversary

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PACT lead athletic trainer Will Keller (right) works with former New Orleans Saints All-Pro running back Dalton Hilliard (left) during a recent screening for former NFL players at the PACT clinic. (Photo by Parker Waters)

May marks the first anniversary of Tulane University's Professional Athlete Care Team (PACT) clinic. Since opening its doors on May 23, 2017, the clinic has served 121 patients, made a total of 1,420 appointments and hosted several screenings.

Dr. Gregory Stewart, Tulane's chief of physical medicine and rehabilitation, heads up the PACT clinic and oversees a staff that has increased from three to 14 in its short existence. With a screening team casting a nationwide net, PACT has partnered with

the NFL and its Players Association to attract former NFL players for a unique system of comprehensive, post-career care.

“The NFL and NFL Players Association are excited to know there is a place with this level of commitment to their former players,” Dr. Stewart said. “That’s what we wanted to show: we understand their needs and our commitment to taking care of them, both in the short- and long-term.”

PACT offers care in over 10 different specialties, including neurological, orthopaedic examinations, cardiology, urology, vision, hearing, ear, nose and throat, physical therapy, dietary consultation and speech-language.

Stewart and his team had been treating former NFL players for years but the warren of rooms and offices on the fourth floor of the Tulane Medical Center has provided them with a physical location for their specialized care and privacy.

“Our program was known but opening the clinic here, the players have a home, a centralized place they can call their own where someone cares about them,” PACT director of operations Eric Beverly said.

Stewart says privacy has been one of the most attractive aspects, providing players with a secure environment and each one with a designated care manager to walk them through the myriad of doctors and appointments and provide follow up communication. Players receive first-class care whether they are the minimum two-year veterans or Hall of Famers.

The word is beginning to get out. PACT is booked through August and has some appointments scheduled into October with referrals increasing. Lead athletic trainer Will Keller said PACT is already beginning to outgrow its surroundings.

“We’re busting at the seams, taking over space down the hall,” Keller said. “These are good problems to have.”

Beverly, an NFL veteran who went through the program, said PACT’s mission is to continue getting the word out to the 12-15,000 former NFL players who can benefit from it. There are hopes for additional clinics, a brain bank to study brain tissue, expansion to include other pro sports athletes and an education curriculum called Center for Sport to take it beyond medicine and into community engagement.

“The trust in PACT has ramped up and the word is spreading,” he said. “The national recognition is growing.”

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-Dr. Gregory Stewart