Chaplain: Seau's brain to be donated for research

The Associated Press

The family of former NFL star Junior Seau will donate his brain for research into repetitive head injuries.

San Diego Chargers chaplain Shawn Mitchell said the family made the decision Thursday.

The Seaus "have made this decision to allow for the possibility of helping other people/players down the road through this study," Mitchell wrote in an email Friday.

"The ultimate destination of the brain has not been firmly communicated at this time," Mitchell said.

He added that the family was not speculating as to whether concussions were a factor in Seau's suicide.

Seau, a standout college and Chargers player, was found dead Wednesday at his Oceanside home. An autopsy concluded he shot himself in the chest.

Some have speculated that brain injuries from football may have played a role in his death, but there's been no medical confirmation of such damage.

Family members and friends have said they weren't aware of any issues that may have led to Seau's suicide. Police said no suicide note was found.

"This is not anything I thought he would ever do," former San Diego Chargers safety Miles McPherson said.

A few weeks ago, a smiling Seau was videotaped playing a ukulele and singing while attending the spring game at Southern California, where he starred before being drafted by the Chargers in 1990.

Mitchell said that friends of Seau's who were at his charity golf tournament a month ago said his "spirits were great."

Boston University's Center for the Study of Traumatic Encephalopathy has analyzed the brains of dozens of former athletes, including that of former Chicago player Dave Duerson, who shot himself in the chest last year.

While saying it was saddened by Seau's death, center officials would not say if they have reached out to the Seau family or would be interested in studying his brain.

Duerson's family has filed a wrongful death suit against the NFL, claiming the league didn't do enough to prevent or treat concussions that severely damaged

Duerson's brain before he died in in February 2011.

Former Atlanta Falcons safety Ray Easterling, who had joined in a concussion-related lawsuit against the league — one of dozens filed in the last year — shot himself last month at age 62. His wife has said he suffered from depression and dementia after taking years of hits.

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