

Sports Medicine Monthly

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MANAGEMENT OF CONCUSSION:

Writing a Concussion Policy



For an administrator, coach, athletic director, and especially as a parent, it is important to understand how your school system will be managing concussions. Therefore, the creation and implementation of a concussion management policy should be just as important as the

requirement for all staff to be trained in CPR, First Aid, and AED usage. These requirements are common sense and a standard-of-care necessity, and they help to ensure that even in the worst situations, best-practiced, research-based care is initiated without delay. Therefore, whether you are reviewing an existing concussion policy or writing your first, this edition of the newsletter will help you on your way.

Also keep in mind that successful concussion management is whole person management. In daily living, the brain and its neurological tissues are under tremendous demand. When a concussion occurs, neurological demands increase further to manage life while also managing recovery. On a regular basis, this aspect of concussion management is missed or inappropriately managed. All too often, student-athletes are returned to school still symptomatic and struggling academically. Athletes who would shine under 'Friday night lights' are now wincing under the pain of a headache due to the brilliance of fluorescent lighting, and parents who usually have great confidence in the medical community are stymied and left feeling somewhat hopeless by a clinician who only says "rest one week and then you should be fine."

For reasons such as these, your concussion policy should demonstrate the utmost standard of quality in protecting student-athletes.

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Who Clears the Athlete to Play?

The concussion law in the state of Oklahoma was one of the greatest achievements for the safety of student-athletes to date. It set a legal standard for protection and well-being in concussion management. It also left individualized discretion on which clinician should be evaluating the concussed athlete. In accordance with OK Statute 24-155 of Title 70:

"A youth...may not participate until the athlete is evaluated by a licensed healthcare provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussion"

With that, each school district, and rightfully so, was given the opportunity to direct which clinician they would choose to provide the standard of care for concussion management for their district. As a result, multiple clinicians across the state are now "managing" concussed athletes; sometimes effectively, and sometimes not so. How do we know this?



Did you ever hear or see one of the following?

- A set timetable for recovery and return to play without a follow-up appointment
- A set timetable for recovery and return to play without a progression in activity levels
- Use of medications such as Ibuprofen, Advil, Motrin, or even Tylenol for headache management
- Concussions graded as mild, moderate, or severe, or grade 1, 2, or 3 before all symptoms resolve
- Permission to return to school or athletics despite continued, unrelenting symptoms

Each example listed is no longer consistent with the standard of care for concussion management.

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Who Clears the athlete to Play

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Sometimes these things do happen and the rational is simply the fact that each clinician makes their own individualized commitment to continuing education in this specific area. If their education is up-to-date, their management techniques can be highly effective. If they are not up-to-date, they will eventually be utilizing out-dated and in-effective management techniques; whether they are a nurse, a certified athletic trainer, or even a medical doctor.



So to answer the question once and for all who should clear the athlete to play, consider the following statistics.

Quantity of research articles published in the last 10 years by journal/discipline:

(Data obtained from individual journal websites on 3/21/12)

<i>The American Journal of Nursing</i>	10
<i>Journal of The American Medical Association</i>	49
<i>Journal of Athletic Training</i> and <i>The American Journal of Sports Medicine</i>	161

For a research-based and standard-of-care concussion management policy, always seek the certified athletic trainer and the sports medicine fellowship-trained physician for the well-being of your student-athletes. They are the standard of care for professional, semi-professional, and collegiate athletics, and if you give them the opportunity, they will bring the standard of care to a high school near you.



The American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine

An Effective Concussion Policy

*Dates on the right column reference past editions of this newsletter which are designed to aid you in this process. All past newsletters are archived free-of-charge on our website:

www.csosortho.com/sports-medicine-monthly.html

- #1. Overview:** (Aug. 2011)
 - Introduction to Concussion and Safety in Sport
 - Rules, Policies, and Laws
- #2. Defining a Concussion:** (Oct. 2011)
 - Mechanisms of Injury
 - Signs & Symptoms of Concussion
 - Complications & Long-Term Conditions (Mar. 2011)
- #3. Defined Concussion Management:**
 - The Licensed Health Care Provider (Apr. 2011)
 - Evaluation Procedures (Sep. 2011)
 - Acute Treatment and Management (Oct. 2011)
 - Rehabilitation and Return to Play (Nov. 2011)
 - A. Academic Rehabilitation (Dec. 2011)
 - B. Athletic Rehabilitation (Jan. 2012)
 - (Feb. 2012)
- #4. Written Acknowledgement of Education:**
 - Athletic Administration, Staff, and Coaches
 - Student-Athletes and Parents/Guardians

A Note to the Reader.....

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