



Wednesday, November 05, 2014

Concussion Committee Members,

My name is John DeWitt, PT, DPT, SCS, ATC; Physical Therapist and Assistant Clinical Professor at The Ohio State University. I commend the committee's work to protect the safety of athletes suffering concussion and honored to speak on behalf of the Ohio Physical Therapy Association.

Physical therapists are licensed health care professionals who are trained in the diagnosis and management of traumatic brain injuries including concussion (a form of mild traumatic brain injury). Physical Therapists play an important role in the school and sports settings. We provide a unique contribution to the concussion care management team, particularly in the areas of assessment balance and vestibular evaluation, rehabilitation from this form of brain injury, and return to sport.

A physical therapist's entry-level education is a graduate degree culminating in the doctorate of physical therapy. Entry into physical therapy schools is extremely competitive, and physical therapists as a group are highly intelligent, highly capable health care professionals. While most in the general public think of physical therapy for musculoskeletal problems, physical therapists are also experts in the in rehabilitation from brain injuries such as stroke, neurologic diseases, and traumatic brain injuries. Physical therapy school includes extensive coursework in neuroanatomy, neuroscience, neurologic rehabilitation and clinical application. In addition, clinical training experiences are required in a variety of practice settings.

Licensure as a physical therapist requires successful completion of this academic and clinical education program, followed by passing a rigorous national board examination. This unique training prepares physical therapists to effectively assess concussion on the field, during rehab, and safely return the athlete to sport. Current clinical practice guidelines exist that include physical therapists in the assessment and management of concussion as well as criteria for safe return to sport.<sup>1</sup> Several Physical Therapists including myself also work collaboratively with The Centers for Disease Control and The American Academy of Neurology<sup>2</sup> to revise and develop management guidelines for sports and for the care of school-age children recovering from concussion.



The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) is currently working with federal and state legislators collaboratively to craft legislation that will ensure the safety of athletes recovering from concussion. Several Federal (H.R. 3532; H.R. 5324; S. 2718) and State (H.B. 143) bills have supported Physical Therapists as qualified licensed healthcare professionals trained to assess and manage concussion. Concussion varies in presentation, management and recovery, with many modifiers that affect prognosis. Concussion management requires an integrated multi-disciplinary healthcare team including Physical Therapists appropriately working alongside Physicians, Athletic Trainers, Neuropsychologists and others.

Standardized tools such as the Sports Concussion Assessment Tool 3 (SCAT 3), along with evidence based treatment strategies such as a graded return to exercise progression following concussion should be included in the current guideline development as described by the 4<sup>th</sup> Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport.<sup>1</sup> It is the responsibility of all healthcare professionals testifying today to be knowledgeable and trained in such evidence-based guidelines to continue ensuring the safety of Ohio's athletes.

I am encouraged by the engagement of the many healthcare professional presenting to the committee and strongly recommend the inclusion of Physical Therapists into these guidelines. The specialized scope and breadth Physical Therapists' training are crucial to the comprehensive needs for assessment, rehabilitation, and safe return to sport following concussion.

Respectfully Submitted,

John DeWitt, PT, DPT, SCS, ATC

1. McCrory P, Meeuwisse WH, Aubry M, et al. Consensus statement on concussion in sport: the 4th International Conference on Concussion in Sport held in Zurich. *Br J Sports Med.* 2013;47:250-258.
2. Giza CG, Kutcher JS, Ashwal S, et al. Summary of evidence-based guideline update: Evaluation and management of concussion in sports: Report of the guideline development subcommittee of the America Academy of Neurology. *Neurology* 2013;80;2250-2257.