



NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
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SPORTS MEDICINE

November 7, 2014

Dear Concussion Committee Members, Mr. Richard Hodges and Members of the Ohio Department of Health:

My name is **Thomas L. Pommering, DO.** I have served as the Medical Director and Division Chief of Sports Medicine at Nationwide Children's Hospital since 2001. I am also the Co-Director of the Sports Concussion Clinic at Nationwide Children's Hospital which has been providing comprehensive, multispecialty care for children with sports and non-sports related concussions since 2008.

I am here today to share my opinion and expertise regarding the educational requirements necessary to qualify a physician to assess and clear a child for return to play after a concussion. My position is that the law, as currently written, is serving the best interests of the children of Ohio. More specifically, licensed physicians, defined as a M.D or D.O., are in the best position to provide the final assessment and clearance for concussed children. This is based on our broad didactic and clinical training, and scope of care that we provide to children on a daily basis.

To date, our concussion clinic has seen over 13,000 visits. We work regularly with athletic trainers, administrators, teachers and nurses from the schools. In addition, The Sports Medicine Division is actively involved with presenting and publishing research dedicated to better recognizing and treating concussions in young athletes and providing practical and up-to-date information to children, parents, teachers and educators on concussion. So, as you can see, we feel that the standard of care in this community for the management of concussion in children has already been established and lies with M.D. and D.O. physicians who have comprehensive, broad-based training and regularly provide comprehensive care to children. This is something we're passionate about and fully support to maintain the highest quality of care for Ohio's youth.

We have a saying in our division about concussions: "If you've seen one concussion, you've seen one concussion." By that we mean that even though we may see more than 3000 children per year with a concussion, no two are completely alike. Concussions are serious injuries, and the care of this injury should not be compromised. I've had children with post-concussion complications such as stuttering, narcolepsy, cataplexy, tics, chronic headaches, learning disorders and long-term vision changes and balance problems. Through their concussion work ups, we have discovered potentially serious or lethal arteriovenous malformations, aneurysms and brain malformations. While providing comprehensive care for concussed children, we have seen children who are experiencing depression, suicidal ideation, bullying and other types of abuse. This is a complex and potentially serious injury in children that can have lethal complications, such as second impact syndrome, if not managed by the most qualified



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practitioner. A physician (M.D. or D.O.) has the training to recognize any of these problems as they oversee their management.

That is not to say that managing children with concussions does not sometimes involve adjunctive care by other health care providers such as physical therapists, athletic trainers, counselors, optometrists and chiropractors. However I feel that they should be working in conjunction with a physician, M.D. or D.O., who should ultimately provide the clearance for return to play.

As an osteopathic physician myself, I appreciate the value of manual and manipulative medicine as an adjunctive treatment of concussion. However, concussion is a complex injury occurring in a vulnerable population and the ultimate responsibility for clearance of these children should lie with the most qualified. Therefore, in the best interest of the children of Ohio, I feel that the law, as currently written, regarding clearance and to return to play, should continue to be determined by a physician, M.D. or D.O.

Thank you for your time and consideration as we come together to decide what will be the best care for the children of Ohio.

Respectfully Submitted,

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