



Development of the 2012 American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians position statement on concussion in athletics

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Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this article is to provide a summary of the development of the American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians (ACBSP) Position Statement on Concussion in Athletics regarding the management of concussion in sport and to offer suggestions to qualifying doctors of chiropractic (DCs) to make return-to-play decisions and clarify common concepts pertaining to evaluating and managing concussion in sport.

Methods: A literature review of position statements from sports medicine organizations was performed. The authors reviewed each statement for content. Key issues in the management of concussion in sport were identified with special consideration to concussion management by DCs. A position statement on the management of concussion in sport was drafted by the authors and submitted to the Board of Directors of the ACBSP for review. The Board of Directors called for minor revision; and after all revisions were made, the document was resubmitted. The Board of Directors of the ACBSP accepted the document for publication and presentation. The document was presented and disseminated to certificants by the ACBSP at the 2011 Chiropractic Sports Sciences Symposium.

Results: The 2012 ACBSP Position Statement on Concussion in Athletics was accepted by the ACBSP Board of Directors.

Conclusion: The Position Statement on Concussion in Athletics has been accepted by the ACBSP. This document offers guidance on the management of concussion in sport and provides qualifying DCs information to make return-to-play decisions.

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Introduction

Concussion in sport is a common injury that has potential for severe long-term sequelae if not managed appropriately.¹ Despite high levels of publicity and advances in research regarding concussion, the care and management plans for concussion are transitional. Currently, an evidence-based “criterion standard” for concussion management has yet to be defined and accepted. Although the appropriate approach to management continues to be developed, a focus on concussion awareness and education has been emphasized as a way to protect athletes from mismanagement and prevention of catastrophic and long-term injury.² For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have developed a Web-based education portal for athletes, coaches, parents, and health care providers on sport concussion.³

Several sports medicine organizations have pushed for legal support in the creation of concussion policy in athletics to proactively protect individuals from sports concussion.² At this time, more than 40 states have passed legislation designed to dictate education standards and care pathways for concussed athletes.⁴ The proposed intent of the concussion laws was designed to protect athletes from improper care. Unfortunately, some organizations have used the concussion platform as an opportunity to redefine the state practice acts of other health care professions. The chiropractic profession has been a victim to this in some states, as legislation has been passed that removes concussion management from the chiropractic scope of practice.⁵

In an attempt to clarify to interested parties the scope of practice for doctors of chiropractic (DCs) who manage concussion, an American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians (ACBSP) board member and lead author has been asked on multiple occasions to attend state chiropractic and state legislative meetings to provide input on concussion legislation. It became clear that what was initially perceived as a political attack on DCs from other professional organizations was more often a misunderstanding in regard to the scalability of the education and training of different populations of DCs in regard to the assessment and management of concussed individuals. In the authors' experience, many legislators, lobbyists, and allopathic health care providers are not aware that there are DCs who are appropriately trained to manage concussion and do so on a regular basis.

The ACBSP identified the need to develop a position statement on the management of concussion by DCs. As the certifying body for chiropractic sports physicians in

the United States, the ACBSP believes its certificants represent the largest specialty group of DCs that manage concussed individuals as a routine clinical practice. The purpose of this article is to describe the development of the ACBSP position statement on concussion in sport.

Methods

After identifying a need to communicate the role of DCs in the management of concussion in sport, the ACBSP Board of Directors nominated 2 advanced certificants to develop a position statement on the management of sport concussion by DCs. The authors were chosen as content experts based on their clinical experience, research history, and educational background regarding concussion. The lead author is a Diplomate of the ACBSP with 30 years of experience in sports medicine practice and 20 years of teaching and research experience on the topic of concussion. He has served as an expert consultant in regard to the development of concussion management and legislation. The second author is a Diplomate of the ACBSP with 4 years of experience in the field of sports medicine, including postgraduate residency and fellowship training in sports medicine. Both authors practice in an elite sports medicine clinic and regularly serve as the primary care providers to manage concussed athletes as a part of their daily clinical practice.

The authors initiated the development of the position statement by reviewing the position statements and consensus statements on concussion from leading national and international organizations, including the 3rd Zurich Consensus Statement of Concussion, National Athletic Trainers Association, American College of Sports Medicine, and American Academy of Neurology.⁶⁻⁹ These documents were reviewed for identification of key issues in concussion management relevant to the chiropractic profession. Additional insight on the topic was gained by oral communication of the authors with international leaders in the subject and legislators involved in policy development on the state and national levels.

During the review of existing position statements from other sports medicine professional organizations, the authors identified the following key issues that a position statement on this topic should include:

- An acknowledgment that the best practices in concussion evaluation and management are constantly changing and that is the responsibility of health care providers involved in the management

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