

Good Samaritan Hospital-Dayton Sports Medicine Center Doctor Says Athletes with Head Injuries Should Sit Out

New Guidelines on Athletes' Concussions Stir Controversy

DAYTON, OHIO, September 21, 2009 – As the Miami Valley kicks off football season, parents, students and coaches should be aware of new guidelines for dealing with concussions experienced by student athletes—and some of the recommendations are causing a stir.

Starting in the 2009-2010 school year, Dr. Michael Barrow, medical director of The Sports Medicine Center at Good Samaritan Hospital, will follow guidelines recently put forth by the International Conference on Concussion in Sport. These guidelines emphasize resting the brain and a graduated return to sports in an effort to reduce the risk of further injury or permanent neurologic deficits. In addition, the guidelines emphasize that athletes must demonstrate recovery from their brain injury prior to returning to sports and cannot return to the event in which they sustained their concussion.

Even though some physicians and coaches are arguing that tighter restrictions on head trauma may provide an incentive for athletes, and even parents, to hide or minimize injuries, Dr. Barrow believes local athletes and parents will be supportive.

“Parents, coaches, certified athletic trainers, physicians – and, of course, injured athletes themselves – need to work together to ensure a concussion is recognized and treated according to the latest scientific guidelines, which include a appropriate rest for the brain and a slow return to the field of play,” Dr. Barrow said.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for young people ages 15-24, sports are second only to motor vehicle accidents as the leading cause of brain injury. While concussion symptoms may seem minor, concussion injuries are cumulative and can result in permanent loss of brain function. Studies have shown 40 percent of athletes with a concussion return to play prematurely. This is especially true for middle and high school athletes, who have a greater risk for depression, early dementia and learning problems.

In the past, certified athletic trainers and physicians used a variety of grading systems to determine how serious a concussion was and to develop a management plan. Recently, however, experts gathered at the third annual International Conference on Concussion in Sport recommended that all concussions be managed individually with a physician examination including consideration of a computer-based assessment (or other neuropsychologic test) that measures brain function, such as memory and reaction time.

“Ultimately, these guidelines protect the long-term health of student athletes, and ensures that a decision to rush a student back into play doesn’t impact their health for the rest of their lives,” said Dr. Barrow, who serves as team physician for Northmont High School and assistant team physician for the University of Dayton.

Concussion information from The Sports Medicine Center at Good Samaritan:

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a brain trauma resulting from a direct blow to the head or from whiplash to the head or neck. Concussions usually cause a temporary alteration in mental status but not necessarily a loss of consciousness. This disturbance in brain function occurs at the cellular/chemical level and is generally not a structural problem that can be seen on an MRI or CT scan.

What are some of the symptoms of a concussion?

Athletes who demonstrate any of following may have a concussion:

- Headache
- Feeling “in a fog”
- Emotional ups and downs
- Amnesia
- Irritability
- Slowed reaction times
- Drowsiness

About Good Samaritan Hospital

Good Samaritan Hospital (www.goodsamdayton.org) is a leading provider of innovative health-care services in Dayton, Ohio. The 600-bed hospital is a full-service teaching facility that delivers best-in-care cardiovascular, cancer, and orthopedic services, as well as advanced diagnostics and women’s health services. It delivers the latest in outpatient treatment, rehabilitation and other services through its Good Samaritan North Health Center. The hospital has been awarded seven gold seal certifications from the Joint Commission – more than any hospital in Ohio – for its outstanding programs, including for heart failure, heart attack, coronary artery bypass surgery, breast cancer, total hip and knee replacement, and stroke care. Good Samaritan is also a recipient of the HealthGrades 2009 Distinguished Hospital Award for Clinical Excellence, which places it among the top five percent of hospitals nationwide. These recognitions reflect the strength and talent of its staff of 600 physicians and 3,300 employees who are committed to excellence and to building a healthier community. Good Samaritan Hospital, along with Miami Valley Hospital, Atrium Medical Center and Upper Valley Medical Center, is a member of the Premier Health Partners system.