Improving Communication with your Team Physician to Optimize your Athlete’s Care

Mary Cardarelli, MS, ATC, PT
Manchester High School
Head Athletic Trainer

Learning objectives
● Summarize concepts of optimizing time with your team physician
● Identify key points that contribute to a healthy working relationship with your team physician
● Prioritizing the role of the athletic trainer as the point of contact for follow up care as part of the healthcare team

Role of Your Team Physician In Secondary Schools

Sideline Team Physician(s)
● Standing Orders
● Game Coverage
● Allots daily appointments for your athletes as needed
● Welcomes open line of communication

Unofficial Team Physician
● No game coverage
● Signs Standing orders only
● Available by phone/meeting
● District School Physician

Conflict of Interest
I have no financial interest to disclose for today’s topic.
DO YOU KNOW YOUR TEAM PHYSICIAN?

“A strong working relationship and open communication with the Athletic Trainer is critical”

“The best team physicians recognize the essential position of the athletic trainer and works diligently to optimize the open communication between athlete, athletic trainer, and physician”

Maintain Lines of Communication

- ATC Initiates Face to Face Meetings
- Letters Email Text MSG’S Faxes
- Technology Telehealth Unified Software
- Planned and Ongoing
- Friday Night

Time Outs - Before Games/Events

- REVIEW EAP WITH:
  - TEAM PHYSICIANS
  - EMT’S
  - SECURITY
  - ATC’s, AD’s & COACHES

Build camaraderie with sports medicine team while preparing for emergencies on the sideline

Barriers to Communication

- Working in Isolation as only ATC
- No Network of Contacts
- Intimidated, decreased confidence and experience
- NO FRIDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL GAMES
- Lack of trust & respect by other HCP’s
  - Outranked academically
- HIPAA compliance when athlete is being seen by outside HCP
- Unwillingness to collaborate

Valuable Experiences Reported by NEW SSAT’s

- Clinical Rotations in High Schools
- Friday Night Football
  - Sideline talks
  - Observing MD’s
  - Feedback
- Support by AD’s & school staff
- Mock scenarios with Coaches
- Communicating injuries to parents
- Peer AT’s & mentors

Factors supporting the transition to practice for the newly credentialed athletic trainer employed full-time in the secondary school setting.
EXTERNAL CHALLENGES with INFRASTRUCTURE
Geographical location
Urban vs. Rural
ACCESS or NO ACCESS

NEIGHBORHOOD INCOME LEVEL, 2013
- VERY AFFLUENT
- ABOVE STATE AVERAGE
- NEAR STATE AVERAGE
- BELOW STATE AVERAGE
- CONCENTRATED POVERTY

1st yr. SSAT in Inner City School
Reported:
- "Athletes would have better care if AT’s were immersed in the community"
- "Undocumented athletes were afraid to go to physicians/hospitals"
- "The Community based health clinic in the school didn’t understand the role of ATC’s"
- "Language Barriers existed & parents couldn’t provide transportation for appointments"

Establish Relationships in Community

Frequency of Informal Communication
Create Learning Opportunities b/w Professions
Contact Mentors Former ATC’s Nurses & HCP’s
Seek out Husky Insurance Providers/PCP’s

4 Pillars of the Sports Medicine Team

COMMITMENT
COLLABORATION
COMMUNICATION
CONTINUITY
The loss of any one of the pillars can lead the team to collapse (3)

Only 37% of Secondary Schools have full time ATC’s
Atlas Project (KSI)

238 High Schools in CT
How many do not have coverage due to SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS (SES)

SSAT’s are Crucial as Health Care Providers for their athletes as they develop networks of care...

"Early access to health care providers is particularly important in adolescents, as their negative health carries into adulthood, leading to poorer health related outcomes throughout life" (4)
Prioritizing SSAT’s Role as Point of Contact

- PCP’s and SSAT’s are often:
  - First point of contact with the healthcare system
  - Manage patient care as care coordinators
- Find a provider in your area that:
  - Values your profession
  - Understands the demographics of your school

SSAT’s - Follow up Care

SSAT In High School Setting reports that their athlete is being seen for physical therapy or is seeing another doctor (hand specialist): The SSAT makes a phone call.

- “Is it OK if I work with them on their rehab?”
  - Some doctors say “yes, go ahead and work with them.”
- “I’ll send them my rehab plan and they’ll be like,
  - “Looks good. Just do this and fix this.”

This experience was important: The SSAT gained feedback and legitimized her role through her interactions and initiative with the MD.

Who are your biggest advocates while caring for your athletes as a SSAT at your school?

- Parents
  - Saves them time
  - Sames them $$$
  - Peace of mind
  - They know you or will get to know you
  - Athlete’s Mental health
- Coaches and Athletes
  - Improves morale when athlete is visible
  - Coach can’t forget about them
  - Coaches’ feedback instills motivation
  - Athlete’s are happier

Don’t forget your Nurses

- Attend their professional development sessions to meet them all.
- Meet and talk daily
- Update them on policies
- Share information - EMR
- Concussion Management for athlete during school
- Resource for doctors and community and HCP’s

We Need More Research

- ATHLETES ARE OUR #1 CONCERN
- BE OPEN MINDED
- BE PART OF THE SOLUTION
- MEET & EDUCATE MD’s & HCP’S
- UTILIZE & SHARE RESOURCES
- MEET YOUR PARENTS
- LEAVE EGOS AT THE DOOR

SSU Sports Medicine Symposium - March 2022
It’s Never Too Late to Climb That Mountain

EL Capitan

CHALLENGE YOURSELF
TRUST IN YOUR ABILITIES
STEP OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

By Tim Neville
NY Times
Published Oct. 26, 2021
Updated Oct. 27, 2021

References
5. https://www.nata.org/professional-interests/job-settings/secondary-school/resources

THANK YOU

Home of the Red Hawks

Contact Information
Mary Cardarelli, MS, LAT, ATC, PT
Manchester High School
134 East Middle Tpke.
Manchester, CT 06042
b11mcard@mpspride.org
W: 860-647-3550, C: 860-305-7412