Everyone wins

Parents, student athletes and coaches benefit from partnership with local professionals

According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, each year over 3.5 million children 14 and younger are treated for sports-related injuries, making injury prevention a priority among sports and health care industries. Therefore, it makes sense to have local physicians and other health professionals work with student athletes to prevent and treat injuries and raise awareness about smart sporting practices.

Team physicians join players on the sidelines, providing immediate treatment to injured athletes to mitigate damage.

"Working with local high schools is a priority for SOS," comments Todd Battaglia, MD, SOS Sports Medicine. "As a community practice, we're committed to educating and treating student athletes to keep them in the game for a lifetime."

In addition, athletic training staff can give support to local schools. Athletic trainers (Ats) are health care professionals who collaborate with physicians to provide services including injury prevention, emergency care, therapy and rehabilitation. ATs provide invaluable full-time services, from pre-season through post-season, if necessary, to area high schools, educating coaches and athletes on safe practices, evaluating and treating injuries, rehab services and more.

"ATs support all high school sports, no matter the injury risk," said Amy Jennings, sports medicine coordinator for SOS Orthopedic and Sports Therapy and AT for Jamesville-Dewitt High School. "We're there to prevent, recognize and manage injuries in student athletes."

ATs play a vital role in communicating with parents, coaches, school administrators and physicians. They also certify coaches they work with in first aid, cardio pulmonary recuscitation (CPR) and automated external defibrillator (AED) use.

"We see the students at every practice and every game which allows us to know them well," said Jennings. This personal relationship can help an AT assess changes in an athlete and address chronic issues such as tendonitis or acute injuries. "Parents and coaches also feel a higher level of comfort, knowing the AT has been following students' history," said Jennings.

Injuries that occur on the field and treated onsite include sprains, muscle strains, fractures and dislocations. When an injury occurs, an AT or physician will provide appropriate immediate care to stabilize the athlete. They then advise parents and coaches on the next steps depending on the severity – whether it be a visit to an emergency department, an after-hours orthopedic care center such as SOS Plus or a follow-up with a family physician.

ATs remain involved with athletes' care throughout rehabilitation. "We stay with the student through the whole process, communicating with their physical therapists and physicians and, when cleared to return, we continue to guide them," Jennings said.

"High school sports should be a fun, enriching experience for students that keeps them healthy and fit and teaches teamwork and sportsmanship," said Battaglia.

SOS Sports Medicine provides these guidelines for athletes, coaches and parents for safe play:

★ Participate in sport-specific training.

★ Engage in regular conditioning. Injuries often occur when athletes suddenly increase duration, intensity or frequency of their activity.

★ Out-of-shape athletes should slowly build up to a higher fitness level.

★ Use proper technique for your position.

★ Use proper equipment, including the right shoes and safety gear.

★ Understand and follow the rules of the game.

★ Limit the number of sports played in one season. Athletes who play more than one sport are at risk for overuse injuries.

★ Take at least one day's rest a week.

★ Only participate in age-appropriate sport activities.

★ Warm up properly before and after play.

SOS Sports Medicine has athletic training staff that supports eight area high schools. They are located at 5823 Widewaters Parkway in East Syracuse. Visit their website at sosbones.com for more information.

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