

Team Physician Consensus Statement

Summary

The objective of the Team Physician Consensus Statement is to provide physicians, school administrators, team owners, the general public, and individuals who are responsible for making decisions regarding the medical care of athletes and teams with guidelines for choosing a qualified team physician and an outline of the duties expected of a team physician. Ultimately, by educating decision makers about the need for a qualified team physician, the goal is to ensure that athletes and teams are provided the very best medical care.

The Consensus Statement was developed by the collaboration of six major professional associations concerned about clinical sports medicine issues: American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, American College of Sports Medicine, American Medical Society for Sports Medicine, American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine, and the American Osteopathic Academy of Sports Medicine. These organizations have committed to forming an ongoing project-based alliance to "bring together sports medicine organizations to best serve active people and athletes."

Expert Panel

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Team Physician Definition

The team physician must have an unrestricted medical license and be an M.D. or D.O. who is responsible for treating and coordinating the medical care of athletic team members. The principal responsibility of the team physician is to provide for the well-being of individual athletes — enabling each to realize his/her full potential. The team physician should possess special proficiency in the care of musculoskeletal injuries and medical conditions encountered in sports. The team physician also must actively integrate medical expertise with other healthcare providers, including medical specialists, athletic trainers, and allied health professionals. The team physician must ultimately assume responsibility within the team structure for making medical decisions that affect the athlete's safe participation.

Qualifications of a Team Physician

The primary concern of the team physician is to provide the best medical care for athletes at all levels of participation. To this end, the following qualifications are necessary for all team physicians:

- Have an M.D. or D.O. in good standing, with an unrestricted license to practice medicine
- Possess a fundamental knowledge of emergency care regarding sporting events
- Be trained in CPR
- Have a working knowledge of trauma, musculoskeletal injuries, and medical conditions affecting the athlete

In addition, it is desirable for team physicians to have clinical training/experience and administrative skills in some or all of the following:

- Specialty Board certification
- Continuing medical education in sports medicine
- Formal training in sports medicine (fellowship training, board recognized subspecialty in sports medicine [formerly known as a certificate of added qualification in sports medicine])
- Additional training in sports medicine
- Fifty percent or more of practice involving sports medicine
- Membership and participation in a sports medicine society
- Involvement in teaching, research and publications relating to sports medicine
- Training in advanced cardiac life support
- Knowledge of medical/legal, disability, and workers' compensation issues
- Media skills training

Duties of a Team Physician

The team physician must be willing to commit the necessary time and effort to provide care to the athlete and team. In addition, the team physician must develop and maintain a current, appropriate knowledge base of the sport(s) for which he/she is accepting responsibility.

The duties for which the team physician has ultimate responsibility include the following:

Medical management of the athlete

- Coordinate pre-participation screening, examination, and evaluation
- Manage injuries on the field
- Provide for medical management of injury and illness
- Coordinate rehabilitation and return to participation

- Provide for proper preparation for safe return to participation after an illness or injury
- Integrate medical expertise with other health care providers, including medical specialists, athletic trainers and allied health professionals
- Provide for appropriate education and counseling regarding nutrition, strength and conditioning, ergogenic aids, substance abuse, and other medical problems that could affect the athlete
- Provide for proper documentation and medical record keeping

Administrative and logistical duties

- Establish and define the relationships of all involved parties
- Educate athletes, parents, administrators, coaches, and other necessary parties of concerns regarding the athletes
- Develop a chain of command
- Plan and train for emergencies during competition and practice
- Address equipment and supply issues
- Provide for proper event coverage
- Assess environmental concerns and playing conditions

Education of a Team Physician

Ongoing education pertinent to the team physician is essential. Currently, there are several state, regional and national stand-alone courses for team physician education. There are also many other resources available. Information regarding team physician specific educational opportunities can be obtained from the organizations listed to the right.

Team physician education is also available from other sources such as: sport-specific (e.g., National Football League Team Physician's Society) or level-specific (e.g., United States Olympic Committee) meetings; National Governing Bodies' (NGB) meetings; state and/or county medical societies meetings; professional journals; and other relevant electronic media (Web sites, CD-ROMs).

Conclusion

This Consensus Statement establishes a definition of the team physician, and outlines a team physician's qualifications, duties and responsibilities. It also contains strategies for the continuing education of team physicians. Ultimately, this statement provides guidelines that best serve the health care needs of athletes and teams.

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