The Sports Medicine Team: Roles and Responsibilities of the Team Physician

Stephen M. Simons, MD, FACSM

Credit: Tom Best, MD, PhD
Objectives

- Understand the roles and responsibilities of the team physician
- Distinguish roles with the athlete/parents compared with coaches/administrators/general public
- Understand pre-season, in-season, and post-season goals and responsibilities
- Understand return-to-play issues for the team physician

- I have no commercial, financial, or research relationships or interests within the past 12 months that affect my ability to provide a fair and balanced presentation for the proposed CME activity.
ACSM Team Physician Consensus Statements

- Team Physician
- Sideline preparation
- Return to play
- Female athlete
- Mass participation event management
- Psychological issues in the injured athlete
- Concussion
- Injury and illness preparation
- Adolescent athlete
- Master’s athlete
The Team Physician - Definition

- MD/DO with unrestricted license
- Responsible for treating and coordinating medical care of athletic team members
- Provide for well-being of individual athletes
- Expertise in musculoskeletal injuries and medical conditions encountered in sports
- Understands confidentiality issues when dealing with athletes
Consensus Statements-
Participating Organizations

- American Academy of Family Physicians
- American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons
- American College of Sports Medicine
- American Medical Society for Sports Medicine
- American Orthopedic Society for Sports Medicine
- American Osteopathic Academy of Sports Medicine
The Team Physician

- Recreational
- High School
- College
- AAU-Olympics
- Professional
- Paraolympic athlete

- Many similarities and some differences for different levels
- Need to understand a given sport as to its differing requirements
Responsibilities to Athletes and their Families

- Protect them from injury and illness
- Allow them to participate
- Communication
- Confidentiality
Responsibilities to Coach, Staff and School

- Education
- Be available & acquainted with staff
- Facilitate rapport
- Balance needs and finances
- Protect from liability
- Formal agreement
The Sports Medicine “Team”

Desirable training skills

- Specialty board certification
- Training in sports medicine
- Significant portion of clinical practice focused on sports medicine
- Continuing medical education in sports medicine
- Membership and participation in sports medicine societies
- Involvement in teaching, research, and publications related to sports medicine
- Training in ACLS/ ATLS
- Knowledge of medical/ legal, disability, and workers’ comp issues
- Media skills training
Medical Management of Athletes

- Coordinate PPE’s
- Manage injuries on the field
- Provide for medical management of injury and illness
- Coordinate rehab and return to play (RTP)
- Provide for proper prep for safe RTP after illness
- Integrate medical expertise with other HCPs (ATC’s, allied health professionals, specialists)
- Provide for appropriate education and counseling regarding nutrition, strength and conditioning, ergogenic aids, substance abuse, and other medical problems that could affect athletes
- Provide for proper documentation and medical record keeping
Administrative and Logistical Duties

- Establish and define relationships of all involved parties
- Educate athletes, parents, admin, coaches et al 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
Preseason Planning

- Develop administrative protocols
- Establish roles of key personnel
- Develop and complete the PPE
- Review ALL information
- Determine eligibility
- Compliance with OSHA and pharmacy regulations
- Proper documentation and medical record keeping
- Rehearse emergency plan
- Define in writing the obligations and responsibilities of the team physician
Administrative Policy Essentials

- Develop chain of command and define responsibilities of personnel
- Establish emergency response plan for practice and competition
- Comply with OSHA standards
- Establish environmental condition policy for modification/suspension of play
- Establish medical record keeping plan
- Define the role, authority, and responsibilities of sideline medical coverage
Administrative Policy
Nice-to-Haves

- Rehearse emergency response plan
- Establish network of other HCP’s
  - Specialists, ATC’s, AHP’s
- Establish Policy for dissemination of info regarding athlete’s health
- Prepare letter of understanding between team physician and admin, defining obligations, responsibilities
Ethical Issues

- Confidentiality
- HIPPA compliant/ FERPA compliant
- Medical and psychological conditions that affect participation and well-being
- Athlete’s medical condition(s) that affects other participants
- Drug testing results
Ethical Issues

- Informed Consent

- Discussion of all reasonable treatment options
  - short and long term risks and benefits

- Athlete autonomy/desires versus optimal medical treatment

- Occasions and locations for which informed consent must be given in time-sensitive situations (training room, sideline)
Ethical Issues

- Conflict of Interest
  - Financial relationships with industry
  - Financial relationships with team/organization
  - Personal/Professional gain versus welfare of the athlete
- Influence of third parties
  - Pressure from teammates, coaches, administrators
  - Pressure from parents/guardians, community, media, and social media.
Ethical Issues

• Drug Use

  • Pressure to supply/ administer, hide use of or provide counsel regarding illegal, illicit, or performance-enhancing drugs

  • The use of local or systemic pain medications to allow participation.
Ethical Issues

• Advertising/ marketing/ publicity
  • Individual or corporate payment to the team to be the team physician
  • Individual, corporate, or institutional payment to the team for sponsorship or naming rights.

• New products and technology
  • Endorsement, utilization, or prescription of treatments, medications, devices, and equipment without evidence of efficacy or safety.
Medicolegal Issues

- Potential medicolegal liability
  - Compliance with school and governing body guidelines, standards, policies, regulations, and rules
  - Compliance with local, state, and/or federal rules, regulations, and laws.
  - Compliance with privacy laws.
  - Decisions made as a result of the PPE, clearance to play, waivers, and RTP.
  - Evaluation and Management of significant on-field injuries and illnesses
  - Medical record documentation
Medical Game-Day Plan Essentials

- Determine final athlete clearance for RTP
- Assess and manage game-day injuries and illness
- Determine athlete’s same-game RTP
- Closely observe game from appropriate location
- Notify appropriate parties about athlete’s injury or illness
- F/U care and instructions for athletes who require tx during or after play
- Properly document all care/decisions
Medical Game-Day Plan

Nice-to-Haves

- Monitor equipment safety and fit
- Monitor post-game referral care of injured or ill athletes
Game-day Admin Planning Essentials

- Determine which personnel attend
- Assess environmental concerns and playing conditions
- Plan for opposing team care
- Introduce medical team to officials
- Review emergency medical response plan
- Check communication equipment function
- Find exam and tx sites
- Do post-game review
- Make necessary modifications to medical and admin plans
Establish RTP Process

- Chain of command
- Communicate with players and others
- System of documentation
- Protocol to release information
- Safety of athletes and other participants
- Individualized plan MUST be communicated
- Provide realistic goals for the athlete—don’t set them up to fail
- Don’t forget psychological aspects of RTP!
Injury Disclosure

- Player
- Family
- Public
- The Team
- The League
- Agent

- Contract Interest
- Press/ Media
- Players’ association
- Second Opinions
Post-season Evaluation

- Summarize injuries and illness
- Improved medical / admin protocols
- Implement strategies to improved sideline prep
Medical Plan

• Essential:
  • Meet with appropriate team personnel and admin to review season
  • ID athletes who require post-season care

• Desirable:
  • Monitor health status of injured/ill
  • Do post-season physicals, if needed
  • Supervise off-season conditioning
Administrative Protocol

- Essential: Review and modify medical and admin protocols
- Desirable: Compile injury and illness data
Final Comments

• Preparation and communication are the keys

• Safety and welfare of the athlete are first and foremost

• Chain of command critical to your success

• Avoid personally marketing yourself through your players and injuries

• Treat player as a private patient in your care

• At times, specifically discussing an injury may have value to everyone

• You, as team physician, have final say, not the consultant
Every team would like to think it does its best work when the stakes are highest—when the company’s future or its own rides on the outcome. JFK
Thank you

“Problems cannot be solved with the same level of awareness that created them.”
Albert Einstein