

## **PATS is Asking: Are Schools in the United States Involved or Committed to the Safety of Their Students?**

PATS was very pleased with research presented at the American Academy of Pediatrics meeting showing that students participating in sports at a schools without access to an athletic trainer had a greater likelihood of being injured, suffering recurrent injuries and concussions. Athletic trainers facilitate treatment of injuries and monitor recovery so that athletes are not returned to play prematurely.



Colleen Shotwell, head of athletic training at East Stroudsburg University, and Wendy Dietrich, an assistant athletic trainer.

"Athletic trainers have a skill set that is very valuable, especially now when there is such a focus on concussions and related treatment and care." Cynthia LaBella, MD, FAAP  
(PRWEB) December 26, 2012

With the holiday season in full swing and in light of the incredibly tragic events in Newtown, Connecticut, families across the nation hug their loved ones a little bit longer and schools across the nation find themselves refocusing on the best ways to keep our children safe. Certainly there are more questions than answers at this point and ways for prevent tragedies like that from ever happening again will require much thought and creative solutions. Instead a far simpler question sadly lingers on after more than twenty years since the American Medical Association endorsed the services provided by athletic trainers. Why do approximately half of the high schools in our nation still fail to provide their students' access to athletic training services? Research presented at the October meeting of American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) titled "A Comparative Analysis of Injury Rates and Patterns Among Girls' Soccer and Basketball Players," showed that students participating in sports at a schools without access to an athletic trainer had a greater likelihood of being injured, suffering recurrent injuries and concussions.

The researchers in the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) study showed that student athletes who participate in girls soccer at schools without access to an athletic trainer are exposed to an 8 times greater injury rate for concussion, a 5.7 times greater risk of recurrent injury, and a 1.73 times greater overall injury rate. Results were similar for girls' basketball where student athletes are exposed to a 4.5 times greater risk of concussion, a 2.97 times greater exposure to recurrent injury and a 1.22 times greater exposure to injury overall. "Athletic trainers have a skill set that is very valuable, especially now when there is such a focus on concussions and related treatment and care. Concussed athletes are more likely to be identified in schools with athletic trainers and thus more likely to receive proper treatment. Athletic trainers facilitate treatment of injuries and monitor recovery so that athletes are not returned to play prematurely," said Cynthia LaBella, MD, FAAP

Athletic trainers are highly educated, uniquely qualified health care providers who specialize in the prevention, assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of injuries and illnesses. In 1988 the American Medical Association's adopted a resolution (Resolution 431, A-97) that endorsed providing student athletes to access athletic training services in secondary schools. That resolution is now the AMA policy H-470.995 Athletic (Sports) Medicine. As licensed medical professionals in many states, ATs receive thorough training in preventing, recognizing, and treating



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critical situations in the physically active. Each AT works closely with physicians to create and apply appropriate emergency action plans (EAP) and return to play (RTP) guidelines.

Beyond the injury prevention skills and services athletic trainers also possess expertise and training in managing life threatening injuries, athletic trainers spend considerable time planning and preparing to manage and prevent unthinkable catastrophic injuries, by preparing emergency action plans for a plethora of emergency situations.

Athletic trainers are committed to providing the to the highest quality care and to following current standards of practice. Evidence of this is the 2012 NATA position statement on preventing sudden death in sport. Leading researchers from ten medical conditions which have been known to cause sudden death in sports provided athletic trainers with updated practice standards when responding to and managing these pathologies.

Ten causes of sudden death in sport, order does not imply incidence or severity.

- Asthma
- Catastrophic brain injuries
- Cervical spine injuries
- Diabetes
- Exertional heat stroke
- Exertional hyponatremia
- Exertional sickling
- Head-down contact in football
- Lightning
- Sudden cardiac arrest

National Athletic Trainers Association's website on position statement, click preventing sudden death  
<http://www.nata.org/position-statements>

It's been more than twenty years since the AMA officially endorsed the services provided by athletic trainers, and still fewer than half of all US schools provide their student's access to the services of an athletic trainer. The answer, in this case, is rather simple - schools without access to athletic trainers are involved in keeping student athletes safe but they are not committed to keeping their students safe, especially when considering the potential for catastrophic sports injury and the volume of injuries in comparison to the incidence of injuries due to violence. There really is no good explanation or excuse for the schools that do not own an automated external defibrillator (AED) and have not provided access to athletic training services. These relatively simple solutions should be adopted before another preventable sports injury occurs. Parents must be proactive and resolute in asking athletic directors and school administrators to show courage and make the decisions to provide these services and that show they are truly committed to the safety of their student athletes. This commitment goes beyond just preventing injuries, minimizing recurrent injury and properly supervising medical return from concussions. Ultimately, having an AED and properly trained individuals like athletic trainers ready to respond in an emergency, in many cases, results in saving student lives.

Additional Resources:

1. Learn how you can help get students access to athletic training services. National Athletic Trainers Association (NATA) – <http://www.nata.org/Athletic-Training>



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2. High Schools with athletic trainers have fewer injuries. American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) – <http://shar.es/hdO77>

3. Learn how you can help get AED's placed in all schools. Greg W. Moyer Foundation – <http://www.gregaed.org>

4. Learn how your school or region can host a screening to prevent Sudden Cardiac Arrest. Simons Fund – <http://www.simonsfund.org>

The Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers' Society offers many resources and recommendations for employers and unique workplace settings who might recognize immediate benefits and cost containment through preventing workplace injuries and early treatment or referral for employee personal injuries by hiring a Licensed Athletic Trainer.

For more information regarding this topic or to schedule an interview with PATS President Yvette Ingram, PhD, LAT, ATC, please contact Scott Dietrich, EdD, LAT, ATC at [northeast@gopats.org](mailto:northeast@gopats.org).

The Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers' Society, Inc. is a progressive organization of licensed health care professionals who work under the direction of a licensed physician. Our society continues to increase public awareness and education regarding Athletic Trainers and the Athletic Training profession while serving as the premier source of information for public safety, injury and illness prevention, early intervention, patient care, and healthcare delivery for the physically active in the Commonwealth.

“The Keystone to a Healthy and Physically Active Life”

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