Improved Concussion Management in Secondary Schools with Certified Athletic Trainers


**Context:** Student athletes with concussions can present with a wide range of signs and symptoms, making management difficult. Certified Athletic Trainers (ATC) who can administer a concussion management program that includes written policies and procedures for the prevention and management of concussions may help reduce such complications. **Objective:** To determine if secondary schools with an athletic trainer were more likely to have concussion education and management policies and procedures (P&P) than schools without an athletic trainer. **Design:** Cross-sectional survey. **Setting:** Online survey. **Patients or Other Participants:** 206 Athletic Directors from public secondary school athletic programs located in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont were invited to participate in the survey. 47 schools (average student enrollment 696, average student-athlete population 348) returned surveys for a 22.8% response rate. **Interventions:** The independent variable was having or not having daily access to a Certified Athletic Trainer. Data analysis performed using SPSS software. 14 separate Pearson’s chi-square tests were used to analyze each dependant variable. **Main Outcome Measures:** Participants filled out an original online survey asking whether or not they had policies and procedures on performing 14 different aspects of a concussion education and management. **Results:** 28 schools reported having daily access to an athletic trainer (59.6%) while 19 schools reported no access to an athletic trainer (40.4%). Schools with daily access to an athletic trainer were 4.18 times more likely to have written P&P for educating athletes on concussions (p=.03), and 21.2 times more likely to have a written P&P for performing neurocognitive baseline testing (p<.001). No other aspect was significant, including educating coaches, nurses or guidance; modifying school attendance, course load, or physical education; or using neurocognitive testing in return to play management, obtaining physician clearance, or utilizing a graded return to play. **Conclusions:** Secondary schools face limited resources with regards to personnel involved in athletics, and having written policies and procedures can facilitate a clear approach to concussion management. Having an athletic trainer in secondary school setting allows for a healthcare professional familiar with concussion management to be a resource for the secondary school athletic programs, both in creating awareness among the athletes and in performing baseline neurocognitive testing. While this study addressed having written policies and procedures in place, further research should address whether these aspects of concussion management are being carried out in the absence of written policies and procedures. **Word Count:** 390.