

The Protecting Student Athletes from Concussions Act of 2011 (H.R. 469)

Position

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) strongly supports the *Protecting Student Athletes from Concussions Act of 2011 (H.R. 469)*, legislation that would allow for the development of concussion management guidelines that address the prevention, identification, treatment, and management of concussions in school-age children. H.R. 469 was introduced by Representative Timothy Bishop (D-NY) on January 26, 2011.

Background

Concussions in student athletes are a growing public health problem that demands immediate attention. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates nearly 3.8 million incidences of sports-related concussions occur every year. Studies have shown that the number of emergency room visits for school-age athletes with concussions rose sharply in recent years. Over a 10-year period, visits for 14- to 19-year-olds more than tripled (from about 7,000 to nearly 22,000). During that same period, visits for individuals age 8 to 13 doubled (from 3,800 to almost 8,000). The rising statistics have been accompanied by an unparalleled increase in public awareness regarding the issue of concussion management. Legislative and policy efforts at the state and local level on concussion management have been highly inconsistent. This inconsistency can be a detriment to the quality of care and considerations necessary for the complexity of concussion injuries within active student athletes.

Concussion Management

The management of a concussion involves a continuum of care, which includes prevention, detection, rehabilitation, and return to participation in activity. APTA believes that concussions should be evaluated and managed by a multidisciplinary team of licensed health care providers that includes a physical therapist. Concussions are complex injuries that can have diverse effects on the individual. As such, the management of concussions does not completely fall within the expertise of any single health care discipline, but instead benefits from the expertise of several different disciplines including, but not limited to, physical therapy, neurology, neuropsychology, and athletic training.

Physical therapists provide a unique contribution to the concussion care management team, particularly in the areas of balance and vestibular evaluation and rehabilitation. Multidisciplinary collaboration is essential in evaluating the appropriateness for a safe return to play. The decision for a student athlete to return to activity can often become convoluted without a structured protocol that considers the health needs of the student athlete first and foremost.

H.R. 469 would make this decision easier by ensuring school districts have concussion management plans that educate students, parents, and school personnel about how to recognize and respond to concussions. This legislation would also provide student athletes with information about how to prevent and manage concussions, while also assisting in their safe return to academic and athletic performance.

Broadly Supported

H.R. 469 is widely supported by a number of health care and education groups, as well as leading athletics organizations, such as the National Football League (NFL) and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).



American Physical Therapy Association

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Co-Sponsor H.R. 469 Today!

For additional information, contact the American Physical Therapy Association's Government Affairs Department at 703/706-8533 or advocacy@apta.org.



Facts About Physical Therapists and Physical Therapist Assistants

Who We Are

Physical therapists (PTs) are health care professionals who diagnose and treat individuals of all ages, from newborns to the very old, who have medical problems or other health related conditions that limit their ability to move and perform functional activities in their daily lives. PTs also work with individuals to prevent the loss of mobility before it occurs by developing fitness- and wellness-oriented programs for healthier and more active lifestyles.

Physical therapist assistants (PTAs) provide selective physical therapy interventions under the direction and supervision of physical therapists.

What We Do

PTs examine each individual and develop a plan of care using treatment techniques to promote the ability to move, reduce pain, restore function, and prevent disability. Under the direction and supervision of the PT, PTAs provide selective physical therapy interventions based on the developed plan of care.

Where We Practice

PTs and PTAs provide care for people in a variety of settings, including outpatient clinics or offices; inpatient rehabilitation facilities; skilled nursing, extended care, or subacute facilities; education or research centers; schools; hospices; industrial, workplace, or other occupational environments; and fitness centers and sports training facilities.

Education & Licensure

All PTs must receive a graduate degree from an accredited physical therapist program before taking a national licensure examination that permits them to practice. The majority of programs offer the doctor of physical therapy (DPT) degree. State licensure is required in each state in which a physical therapist practices. PTAs must complete a 2-year associate's degree and are licensed, certified, or registered in most states.

American Physical Therapy Association

The American Physical Therapy Association (www.apta.org) is a national organization representing more than 77,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students nationwide. Its goal is to foster advancements in physical therapist education, practice, and research.

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