

2017 AAN SPORTS CONCUSSION CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Media Contacts:

Renee Tessman, rtessman@aan.com, (612) 928-6137

Michelle Uher, muher@aan.com, (612) 928-6120

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Abstract Title: High school principals' perception of concussion and return to learning accommodations

Press Release Title: What Do High School Principals Know About Concussion?
Study Examines Return-to-learning Environment for Students

Authors: Kristyn Tekulve, Derek White, Vincent Nittoli, Isaac A. Janson

Background: Studies in adolescents show increased post-concussive symptoms after prolonged cognitive rest. These data support a symptomatic return to learning, necessitating academic accommodations. High school principals' perceptions of concussion management can influence the care and accommodations students will receive.

Methods: 157 Indiana public high school principals (157/410) completed an anonymous online survey.

Design/Results: 42% (65/155) reported 1 to 5 students suffered a concussion in the last year. 34% (50/149) received training in the academic management of students with concussions. 95% (141/149) had access to a school nurse or an individual comfortable monitoring symptomatic students. 84% (123/147) expressed being either very comfortable or somewhat comfortable managing students with concussions, whereas 17% (24/147) expressed discomfort or do not manage concussed students. The majority (75/144; 52%) state lack of communication among students, physicians, and schools as the largest barrier when instituting academic accommodations. 92% (133/145) state a willingness to accept academic accommodations as long as necessary. Principals were highly likely or likely to allow students to take frequent breaks (132/138; 96%), limit screen time (138/140; 99%), test or work in a quiet environment (139/140; 99%), and avoid busy environments (134/139; 96%). Accommodations for testing depended on the type of testing: 71% (95/134) of principals reported that they would be highly likely or likely to allow for no regular testing and 98% (136/139) were highly likely or likely to grant increased testing time. However, only 58% (74/128) would approve no standardized testing. 74% (100/135) stated that removal of academic accommodations should be determined by a physician.

Discussion: These data are encouraging: signaling a willingness of principals to provide academic accommodations for concussed students. However, the data suggests a knowledge gap about the prevalence of concussion and supports a need for further education of school principals on the symptoms and sequelae of concussions.