



Testimony in Support of SB 217

Senate Health Care Committee

March 30, 2017

Good afternoon Chair Monnes Anderson and members of the committee. My name is James Casler; I'm a physical therapists with experience in concussion management, and I'm here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 217 (and proposed amendments) on behalf of the Oregon Physical Therapy Association.

"Physical therapists are health care professionals who help individuals maintain, restore, and improve movement, activity, and functioning, thereby enabling optimal performance and enhancing health, well-being, and quality of life. Their services prevent, minimize, or eliminate impairments of body functions and structures, activity limitations, and participation restrictions."¹

Physical therapists (PTs) routinely work in collaboration with numerous health care professionals to provide optimal patient care in a variety of settings, including but not limited to: acute care rehabilitation, acute inpatient rehabilitation, skilled nursing facility, outpatient rehabilitation, school systems, collegiate and professional sports and sports medicine clinics. Within these settings, PTs continually evaluate the multitude of bodily systems that can be effected following a concussion (i.e. mental status, cognitive function, balance (oculomotor, proprioception, vestibular), neuromuscular function, gait, etc.). Physical therapists are often already working in partnership with physicians in concussion management and due to their expertise in balance, functional movement, and neuromuscular assessment, PTs are in a natural position to make accurate and timely decisions regarding return to activity determinations.

Given that physical therapists have extensive experience treating head trauma/concussion resulting from motor vehicle accidents and falls, current law excluding PTs from concussion management in athletic settings defies logic and ignores experience in interactions/rehabilitation with individuals that have sustained head trauma in other settings.

The ability to distinguish between mechanical cervical symptoms versus concussion symptoms is important when evaluating an individual suspected of having a concussion. Patients in Oregon have had direct access to physical therapists since 1993 and the profession's ability to differentially diagnose has been well established over the years. Musculoskeletal expertise is the bedrock of the PT profession. Thus, making PTs ideal candidates to perform the accurate differential diagnosis when attempting to discriminate between mechanical cervical and concussion pathologies. With these factors being considered, PTs involvement in the plan of care allows the health care team to function optimally within their respective licenses while ensuring patient safety with gradual return to prior level of function.

¹*Guide to Physical Therapist Practice 3.0*. Alexandria, VA: American Physical Therapy Association; 2014. Available at: <http://guidetoptpractice.apta.org/>. Accessed [03/28/2017].

To become a PT today, one obtains a Doctorate of Physical Therapy. A minimum required skill set for all entry level graduates is required by the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) accrediting body and is listed in detail on the APTA webpage:

http://www.apta.org/uploadedFiles/APTAorg/About_Us/Policies/BOD/Education/MinReqSkillsPTGrad.pdf. "Minimum skills" for a Doctor of Physical Therapy are defined as "foundational skills that are indispensable for a new graduate physical therapist to perform on patients/clients in a competent and coordinated manner. Skills considered essential for any physical therapist graduate include those addressing all systems (i.e. musculoskeletal, neurological, cardiovascular pulmonary, integumentary, GI, and GU) and the continuum of patient/client care throughout the lifespan." The skills for entry level PT graduates require they be able to properly screen, examine, evaluate, diagnose, provide prognosis and interventions, educate, and develop an appropriate plan of care addressing all systems mentioned above. The breadth of knowledge encompassed in this curriculum establishes PTs as experts with the requisite education to provide exceptional patient care with respect to concussion management, diagnosis, treatment, and return to activity decisions.

The OPTA supports SB 217, expanding the list of providers who can return an athlete to play and amendments which would establish an educational certification program and medical liability insurance requirements.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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