

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS/ CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL SPORTS MEDICINE INITIATIVE

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Recognizing the value of organized sports to urban youth, an innovative pilot program designed to enhance the quality of health care for inner city athletes from the Boston Public Schools. Implemented by The Children's Hospital Division of Sports Medicine, this program was designed to prevent and treat sports injuries which have the potential to rob promising athletes of the important opportunities inherent in playing organized sports.

Under the leadership of Dr. Lyle Micheli, head of the Division of Sports Medicine, and Dr. Mininder Kocher, fourteen Harvard orthopaedic surgery residents provided medical coverage for games held around the Boston area during the 2002-2003 scholastic year. The residents, under faculty guidance, provided full medical coverage during the games, pre-participation evaluations, and pre- and post-game sports medicine training needs. During the course of the 2002 high school football season, medical coverage was provided for 21 games around Boston.

Prior to the start of this program, these athletes did not have access to professional medical care during high school sporting events, in contrast to many of their suburban counterparts. The state of Massachusetts mandates that a medical professional be present at every football game. However, due to lack of consistent resources, this coverage was often provided by an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) not trained in sports medicine. Coaches frequently had to rely on their experience to decide whether an athlete required medical attention. With the implementation of this program, resident coverage provided invaluable medical attention to the players. On-field injuries were appropriately diagnosed and treated. Injuries requiring more acute treatment were triaged to the Children's Hospital emergency department, where physician-to-physician communication ensured timely and appropriate care.

The Boston Public Schools/ Children's Hospital Sports Medicine Initiative was an unheralded success in its first year. The experience was excellent for residents interested in sports medicine, as it provided them with an opportunity to take care of on-field sports injuries. The program was also heartily endorsed by the coaches and players of the various participating schools. Due to this success, the program will be expanded beyond football games to include a range of sports for both boys and girls. This program was made possible by generous funding from the Roger and Michele Marino foundation.