

To all Appalachian State Faculty and Staff:

We are writing this memo to provide information about concussions as they relate to academic performance at AppState. ***Students that attend AppState are typically very active and participate in a variety of recreational and athletic activities, which can sometimes lead to injuries.*** The information here is relevant for *all* students who might suffer from concussions – varsity student-athletes as well as non-athletes. Recently, the NCAA has reevaluated its policy on management of concussions and our suggestions below are consistent with their guidelines.

Each year, several AppState students suffer from concussions, caused by blows to the head that lead to the brain itself being damaged. The damage can significantly affect the brain all the way down to the sub-cellular level, and can vary in severity from very mild to potentially completely debilitating (Shaw, 2002, *Prog Neurobiol*, 67, 281-344). Some symptoms of concussions are confusion, nausea or vomiting, headache, dizziness, fatigue, memory/concentration problems, and sleep disturbances. These symptoms may not always be immediately apparent, and can actually worsen over time. The recovery process from concussions can be very difficult to predict. Depending on the severity of the concussion and the medical history of the individual, a person can recover spontaneously in a matter of days, or over very prolonged period. Individuals with repeated concussion are at particular risk.

The accepted treatment for concussions among medical professionals is both physical AND cognitive rest until symptoms resolve (McCrary et al. 2009, *Clin J Sport Med*, 19, 185-195). This includes avoiding not only all *recreational* and *athletic* undertakings but also academic work (including classroom work, reading, and working on computers) as well as activities such as text messaging and videogames. Not resting completely can prolong the length of (cognitive and physical) recovery and can even worsen the symptoms. Neuropsychology testing demonstrates that concussed individuals perform poorly in complex processing tasks. Impaired performance in the classroom is often a result.

Although diagnosing concussions is not a simple task (a concussed brain often appears normal on a CT or MRI scan), AppState students can be monitored carefully after a suspected

concussion to confirm the diagnosis. No student is allowed to resume *recreational* or *athletic* or *full academic* activity until all symptoms have cleared.

If an AppState student receives a concussion, we will ask the student to notify her/his professors to provide information so that the professor remains informed of the student's condition.

The student will also be directed to the Office of Disability Services to see if they could potentially qualify for reasonable accommodations and/or assistive technologies recommendation. If eligible for reasonable accommodations, the student will share their Accommodation Plan with instructors.

The purpose of this memo is to inform the AppState community in general and professors in particular, about the consequences of a concussion so that we can foster a supportive environment for successful treatment and recovery.

Thank you for taking the time to read this memo and for your understanding. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact any of us at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Robert S. Ellison, M.D. MPH
Director, Student Health Service



J.J. Brown
Dean of Students



Dr. Michael Mayfield
Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education