

Sherry Thomas, Policy Coordinator
Washington State Department of Health
Health Systems Quality Assurance
sunrise@doh.wa.gov
PO Box 47850
Olympia, WA 98504-7850

RE: Proposal to Change Chiropractor Scope of Practice

Ms. Thomas,

The Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly opposes the proposal to change the scope of practice for chiropractors in the state of Washington, which would allow chiropractors to perform sports physicals for school athletes and physical examinations required for commercial driver's licenses.

Prohibiting chiropractors from performing pre-participation sports exams protects adolescents and children. Healthy athletes don't just need their musculoskeletal systems evaluated, they require the entire body – including brain, lungs, heart, kidneys and liver – to be in working order to participate safely. Chiropractors are not trained in providing comprehensive medical services to allow for adequate assessment of the whole athlete.

Chiropractors do not:

- Check vision, hearing or blood pressure;
- Examine the heart;
- Interpret family cardiac and genetic history;
- Examine boys' genitalia for the presence of a hernia .

They cannot assess the safety of participation of an athlete who has suffered a concussion, has congenital heart disease or a genetic syndrome, asthma or diabetes.

Risks to athletes

Sudden cardiac death, though rare, is the leading cause of death in exercising young athletes. There has been extensive work done in the pre-participation evaluation of athletes to detect cardiac anomalies and catch those at risk. There is also a growing recognition of the critical importance of assessing for prior head injuries and concussions in a highly structured and rigorous manner.

Some teens try to get their sports forms signed when it is inappropriate. One patient in a WCAAP member's practice had a severe head injury from a motor vehicle accident and tried to get cleared to play football at a school-sponsored physical event by hiding his injury. Having athletes screened in their medical home where their full medical and family history is known is crucial.

Additional risks

In Washington State, in 2011, only 78% of teens had their Tdap vaccine to prevent whooping cough, 70% had their meningococcal vaccine to prevent a form of meningitis, and 35% of female teens had their complete HPV series to prevent cervical cancer. Part of the reason these rates are so low is that it is challenging to get adolescents in for exams. Sometimes the requirement of a pre-participation sports exam is the only way to incent an adolescent to come in for care. Chiropractors are not licensed to provide immunizations and some discourage the practice of immunization.

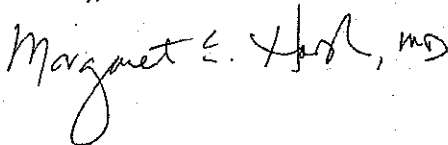
Additionally, chiropractors do not address the 30% of children who are obese, the 1 in 5 teens who are using tobacco products and need help with cessation treatment, and the 1 in 5 adolescents with depression or anxiety who need mental health screening and treatment. In 2011, 5,574 Washington teens gave birth; in 2010, 6500 Washington teens were treated for Chlamydia, 445 were treated for gonorrhea, and another 310 for other sexually transmitted infections. Pre-participation exams provide an opportunity for physicians to address these serious health issues with adolescents.

Sports exams in the medical home

The national academies of pediatrics, osteopathy, family practice and sports medicine recommend pre-participation exams be done in the medical home integrated every two years as part of well child exams by trained MDs or DOs; well child exams should be done yearly. Sports exams aren't a simple matter and should be performed by professionals who can provide high quality, comprehensive care and address the needs of each adolescent individually.

To best ensure the safety and health of Washington athletes, do not allow this change in scope. Though chiropractors devote their expertise to caring for musculoskeletal health, and clearly care deeply about their patients, they are not appropriate care providers to perform these exams.

Sincerely,



Maggie Hood, MD, FAAP
President, Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics