



Memorandum

To: State Association Executive Directors and Commissioners

From: Bob Gardner, NFHS Executive Director
Michael Koester, M.D., Chair of the NFHS SMAC

Subject: Media Reports on New Blood Test for Concussion

Date: February 15, 2018

Recent reports in the media have highlighted the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval of a blood test used for diagnosing a “concussion” (Link to FDA News Release): <https://www.fda.gov/NewsEvents/Newsroom/PressAnnouncements/ucm596531.htm>

Unfortunately, the stories are inaccurate. The test is not actually designed for detecting a sports-related concussion, as defined by the 5th International Conference on Concussion in Sport, but for assessing the probability that the injured person has bleeding in the brain. By definition, the presence of bleeding in the brain after injury is NOT a concussion, but an even more serious traumatic brain injury. The test is also not yet approved for anyone under the age of 18.

At this time, this test holds little value for the vast majority of youth and high school athletes with a suspected concussion. The test was not designed for use on the sideline or in the athletic training room. And, importantly, even if the test is “negative” it does not rule out a concussion. If used, the test will be ordered by a physician in the Emergency Department to help determine if a CT scan of the brain is needed to look for bleeding in the brain.

There should be no change in the current management of a suspected concussion (Link to NFHS Position Statement on Management of Concussion in Sports): http://www.nfhs.org/media/1018446/suggested_guidelines_management_concussion_april_2017.pdf

Thanks,

Michael Koester, M.D.
Chair – NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC)