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## N.J. ATHLETIC TRAINERS URGE YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAMS TO PROTECT CONCUSSED PLAYERS

Oct. 20, 2008 – The Athletic Trainers' Society of New Jersey is urging interscholastic and recreational youth sports programs to take specific measures to prevent further injury to young athletes who sustain a concussion or have sustained a concussion in the past.

The ATSNJ's announcement is precipitated by news reports that a 16-year-old Montclair High School football player had sustained a concussion during a game three weeks before suffering a fatal brain hemorrhage.

The ATSNJ is encouraging players, coaches, and parents to pay attention to lingering signs and symptoms of concussion, and for sports programs to adopt formal written policies requiring the removal from a game or practice any player suspected of having a concussion and prohibiting that player from returning to activity until cleared by a physician.

“Athletes are often eager to return to play following injury, and concussions are no different,” said Dr. Robb Rehberg, president of the ATSNJ. “Athletes need to acknowledge concussion symptoms and not try to hide them. Coaches, parents, and athletes need to know that returning to play before concussion symptoms subside predisposes the athlete to increased risk of brain injury and death.”

Rehberg also advocates that sports programs develop formal policies for players who sustain concussions, which include keeping athletes out of games and practices until medically cleared to resume sports activity.

For collision sports, like football, lacrosse, rugby and ice hockey, baseline cognitive testing has become more prevalent in some high school, college, and professional programs. Results of baseline cognitive tests, which are conducted in the pre-season, are stored and later used to compare against the results of a second cognitive test taken after player has sustained a possible concussion.

By comparing the pre-season results with the second test results, athletic trainers and physicians can evaluate the severity of the suspected concussion and measure the athlete's recovery.

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“Preseason cognitive testing is a very important tool that we can use to ensure that a player is ready to return to sports activity after sustaining a concussion,” said Rehberg.

For coaches and athletic trainers to be prepared for medical emergencies, all sports programs should require player medical history forms. These forms, which are already required to participate in interscholastic sports, would require listing any concussions a player may have sustained in the past, and should be completely and accurately completed and submitted by parents before a player is permitted to participate in any league sports activity.

Coaches and parents should also be trained to detect signs of concussion and taught to follow certain procedures if they suspect a player may have sustained a concussion.

“It is vital that coaches and parents know that if they think there’s a chance a player may have sustained a concussion, the safest thing to do is to remove that player from the game or practice,” said Rehberg. “The consequences of a second impact on a concussed player can be catastrophic, including brain swelling and death.”

Sports programs interested in learning more about what they can do to prevent further injury to concussed athletes are encouraged to contact the ATSNJ at 201-535-4477.

#### ABOUT THE ATHLETIC TRAINERS' SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY

ATSNJ, Inc. consists of Licensed Athletic Trainers, physicians and other allied health care professionals whose goal is to promote quality healthcare for athletes in any setting.

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