

Major League Baseball and Major League Baseball Players Association announce new protocols on concussions

MLBPA Press Release
10 May 2011

NEW YORK -- Major League Baseball (MLB) and the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA) announced today that they have adopted a series of protocols under its new joint policy regarding concussions, which will be in effect from Opening Day forward. On behalf of MLB and the MLBPA, a committee of experts formulated a comprehensive policy that will govern the manner in which concussions are initially diagnosed and the determination of when one may return to the field, dictating the response to both player and umpire concussions at the Major League and Minor League levels.

The key components of the policy are:

- **Mandatory baseline neuropsychological testing requirements** for players and umpires during Spring Training, or when a player joins a club during the season, formalizing a process that most individual clubs follow;
- **Protocols for evaluating players and umpires for a possible concussion**, including during incidents typically associated with a high risk, such as being hit in the head by a pitched, batted or thrown ball or by a bat; being in a collision with a player, umpire or fixed object; or any time when the head or neck of a player or an umpire is forcibly rotated;
- **The establishment of a seven-day disabled list for concussions**, which will aim to allow concussions to clear, prevent players from returning prematurely and give clubs a full complement of players in one's absence; any player on the seven-day DL for more than 14 days will automatically and retroactively be transferred to the 15-day DL, effective with the first day of the initial placement, and with the prior 14 days applying to the initial 15-day maximum term; implemented on a trial basis for the 2011 season;
- **Protocols for clearing a concussed player or umpire to return to activity**; prior to the time that a concussed player is permitted to play in any game (including Major League, Minor League or extended Spring Training games), the club must submit a "Return to Play" form to MLB's medical director; submission of the form is required irrespective of whether the player was placed on the disabled list.

The Commissioner's Office will conduct an orientation for club medical staffs regarding the new protocols. In addition, each club will be required to designate a Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (MTBI) specialist in its home city to evaluate players or umpires when necessary.

The Committee was chaired by **Alex Valadka, MD, FACS**, who is MLB's consultant on MTBI, chief of adult neurosciences and neurosurgery at the Seton Brain and Spine Institute in Austin, Texas. Other experts on the committee included **Andy Jagoda, MD, FACEP**, professor and chairman of the Department of Emergency Medicine, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York; **James Kelly, MA, MD, FAAN**, a neurologist at the University of Colorado Neurosurgery, and professor of neurosurgery at the University of Colorado School of Medicine; **Thomas McAllister, MD**, a neuropsychiatrist at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, and professor of psychiatry & neurology at Dartmouth Medical School; and **John Gofinos, MD**, chair of the Department of Neurosurgery at NYU Medical Center and a representative of the MLB Players Association.

The Committee members included:

- **Roger Caplinger**: Head athletic trainer of the Milwaukee Brewers
- **Tony Clark**: MLBPA Director of Player Relations
- **Steven Erickson, MD**: MLB's medical consultant to the Major League umpires
- **Gary Green, MD**: Medical Director of Major League Baseball
- **Rick McWane**: Head athletic trainer of the Minnesota Twins
- **Mark Schickendantz, MD**: Team physician of the Cleveland Indians and president of the MLB Team Physicians Association
- **Ed Snell, MD**: Team physician of the Pittsburgh Pirates
- **Lonnie Soloff**: Head athletic trainer of the Cleveland Indians
- **Joel Solomon, MD**: Medical consultant to the MLBPA
- **Kathy Weber**: Team physician of the Chicago White Sox

"I believe that Major League Baseball is taking a major step forward on a vital shared goal with the MLB Players Association," said Baseball Commissioner Allan H. (Bud) Selig. "This policy, which reflects the collective expertise of many of the foremost authorities in the field, will benefit players, umpires and clubs alike, and I am proud of the spirit of cooperation that has led us to this result."

"The MLBPA is pleased to have worked with the Commissioner's Office, members of club training and medical staffs and some of today's leading experts in neurology to develop new protocols for the diagnosis and treatment of concussions," said MLBPA executive director Michael Weiner. "Player safety is a major concern of the collective bargaining parties, and these new protocols and procedures should enhance our ongoing efforts to protect the health of players and umpires."