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Screening Participants

March 22, 2011

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A recent tragedy, more highly publicized than similar that have occurred in other times and places in Michigan, has caused caring people to look at what reasonable things could be done differently to further reduce the already small number of deaths that occur in relation to student sports participation. Some folks have been talking about pre-participation screening.

The MHSAA's requirement is that each participant every year must pass a physical examination. The MD, DO, Physician's Assistant or Nurse Practitioner who actually conducts the examination must sign a statement that the student is physically able to compete in athletic tryouts, practices and contests. A student who participates without such a form on file with the school's administration is an ineligible athlete, and any contest in which he or she participates is forfeited.

The MHSAA provides a [sample form online](#) that has been developed by and has the support of a large task force of medical authorities who collaborated through the Michigan Department of Community Health.

The MHSAA also provides in hard copy a shorter form which has been expanded for 2011-12 to include many of the recommendations of the MDCH.

It is still permissible and often happens that schools utilize a different form, or that parents will request and pay for additional pre-participation screening for their children.

As with all beneficial measures to reduce participation risks for student-athletes, many considerations must be balanced. Very many Michigan residents do not have affordable access to expensive medical procedures; and therefore, requirements to perform electrocardiograms or ultrasounds or baseline testing for concussions would be out of their reach. We provide athletic opportunity for all students: suburban, urban, rural and remote kids, as well as the children of migrant workers and refugees, all of whom enjoy many benefits of participating in school sports but many of whom have limited access to limitless medical screening.

If a parent believes more screening is necessary for a child, that family should seek it. If the examining medical professional believes more screening is necessary before certifying a student to compete in athletic tryouts, practices and contests, that medical professional should not sign the form until those additional tests are performed.

For me, this topic is not merely theory or pontification. My perspectives on this topic are shaped by my professional responsibilities to represent a diverse population across a huge state, as well as my personal experience of having a son participate in high school soccer and wrestling with a partially repaired heart defect. How much testing and how much risk in continuing to participate are decisions that are better left to the families involved than anyone else.

(Please see our blogs of [March 30](#) and [May 21](#), 2010, for earlier discussions of this topic. Visit our [Health & Safety Resources](#) for more information on this and other topics related to medical aspects of sports.)

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Comments

Posted by: Kim Overhiser | Tuesday, March 22, 2011 9:24 PM

I see the rational you are using to obtain the conclusions you have listed within your article based on the diversity within our state and the economic differences each family may face. However, I don't believe the medical profession when they tell the public that performing an EKG or ECG on our young athletes is cost prohibitive. This expense could easily be absorbed by the medical profession and alliances drawn between the insurance companies and the medical profession. It's easier than one might think to begin talks now to work out another alternative physical screening of our athletes. WE don't want what has happened in Fennville to happen ever, and I mean ever again, to anyone and atleast 4 more have occurred since we experienced this tragedy within out nation. And it sickens me to no end. And, if the medical professionals don't think it is probable than we need to come up with a means like Bo Kimble has to set up volunteer organizations funded by charitable giving of which every medical practitioner and insurance provider could and should donate to that would make it possible to provide mobile clinics to travel and provide these services to our schools and athletic organizations. Don't let them pull the wool of the statistical quotes and generalities that don't speak

to specific costs and procedures over your head. Many professionals participate in pro bono work as a means of giving back to community well its time we help our student athletes just the same and start giving back, one way or another.

Posted by: [Randall J. Gillary](#) | Wednesday, March 30, 2011 8:17 AM

I would like to thank Jack Roberts and Tom Minter of the MHSAA for their forward thinking and action in adopting the new pre-participation screening forms. The new forms were developed by medical professionals in conjunction with the Michigan Department of Community Health and are state of the art. This action puts Michigan at the forefront of addressing the problem of sudden cardiac arrest of high school student athletes. The use of the new forms will help to identify student athletes who may be at risk of cardiac related problems incidental to participation in high school athletics. Those students will then be referred to medical professionals for further testing. This will undoubtedly save lives. After all, the primary objective for our sons and daughters in high school is for them to first, survive. Kudos to the MHSAA.

Randall J. Gillary - President of The Kimberly Anne Gillary Foundation

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About the Author



Jack Roberts has been at the helm of the MHSAA as its Executive Director since 1986, implementing programs and overseeing tournament administration and regulations for the Association which boasts 1,600 member schools, 13,000 registered officials and 13,000 head coaches.

During the last 37 years, Roberts has spoken to educator and athletic groups, business leaders and civic groups in more than 40 states and five Canadian provinces as one of the nation's most articulate advocates for school sports.

Roberts has served on several national association boards and is board president for the [Refugee Development Center](#). He also is active locally with the [East Lansing Arts Festival](#), [Michigan Society of Association Executives](#), and [Officials for Kids](#).

He is a 1970 graduate of Dartmouth College, where he was a three-year starter for the Ivy League's winningest football team during that span.

He and his wife, Peggy, have two grown sons: John, who is pursuing a doctoral degree in education policy at Harvard; and Luke, who - with his wife, Alison - are teaching in China.

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