

Concussion Care Improved for Area Athletes

It was Friday night, and the biggest football game of the year between Salina South and Salina Central was about to begin. The players were warming up, the cheerleaders were practicing and the crowd was buzzing with excitement. So it's no wonder no one noticed when Maddie Witter, a South High cheerleader, was injured when the cheerleader she was holding above her head suddenly got pulled out of formation and came straight down on Maddie's face and neck.

"I was busy talking and didn't even see it happen," says her mom, Melissa Gordon. "When I looked out across the field I saw Maddie and her friend walking toward me. I thought to myself that it looked like Maddie wasn't feeling well. When she got closer, I realized she was hurt."

Maddie was complaining of neck pain. Her mom also noticed that she seemed agitated and wasn't acting like herself, but her mom blamed it on the pain. Her parents took her to an urgent care center for X-rays. According to Maddie's mom, the physician said the X-ray showed her neck was out of alignment.

Maddie spent the next several days with her dad doing normal activities such as shopping and going to the movies. But when she came home Sunday and went straight to bed, her mom was concerned. That just wasn't like Maddie.

On Monday morning, Maddie still didn't feel well but wanted to go to school because she didn't want to miss dance class that night. Maddie dances at Stepz Dance Company and is very passionate about it. During dance, however, she was complaining of severe neck and head pain and felt dizzy. At that point her mom knew she needed to take her to her own doctor. She knew something was not right. There had to be more to Maddie's injury.

MOTHER'S INTUITION WAS RIGHT

Sara Johnston, M.D., confirmed her mother's intuition. In addition to needing physical therapy for the neck injury, Maddie was also suffering from a concussion. Johnston immediately referred her to Dwane Beckenhauer, M.D., of Salina Regional Surgical Associates for a concussion assessment.

Beckenhauer and his partner Jake Breeding, M.D., use the new ImPACT baseline testing to determine and manage concussions.

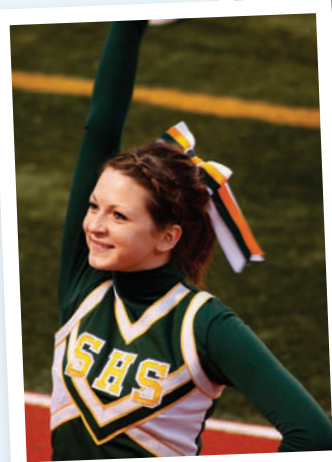
Because Maddie had voluntarily taken the ImPACT baseline test prior to the school year, Beckenhauer was able to compare her current test against the baseline test results.

It was determined that Maddie had, in fact, suffered a concussion.

ImPACT testing involves computer-based tests that measure a person's memory, ability to process visual information and other factors. ImPACT stands for Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing.

Beckenhauer explained to Maddie that her brain needed to heal just like any other injury. The healing process involved no television, no computer, no texting, and basically lying down and resting for several days in a dark room.

ImPACT testing easily identified a concussion sustained by Maddie Witter during a football game, which sidelined her for several weeks to prevent a more serious injury.



"I was so impressed with Dr. Beckenhauer," Maddie's mom says. "He really took her injury seriously. After several days of basically having Maddie do nothing, he then put her on academic restriction, which entailed only half-days of school for the following four weeks and limited school-work. That meant no quizzes, no tests and no note-taking."

At five weeks Maddie took another ImPACT test and was taken off academic restriction, which meant she could slowly begin reintroduction to studying and other activities.

LEADING THE WAY

Breeding, a trauma surgeon, and Rachelle Giroux, R.N., manager of trauma services at Salina Regional Health Center, have been instrumental in leading the ImPACT Testing initiative by educating local and regional coaches, trainers and physicians on the importance of baseline testing and about the new School Sports Head Injury Prevention Act, which requires that schools educate athletes, parents and coaches about the dangers posed by concussions. The new Kansas law also requires that any athlete suffering or suspected of suffering a concussion be removed from play or practice immediately, and written permission from a doctor must be gained in order to return to play or practice.

IT'S THE LAW

"There's so much pressure to get back in the game," Giroux says. "The Sports Head Injury Prevention Act takes that pressure off. It's no longer a choice whether to play or risk injury. It's the law."

Giroux spends a great deal of her time at the hospital answering questions and educating parents, coaches and the medical community.

Salina Regional Health Center hosted a workshop to assist and provide information to multidisciplinary healthcare teams, which included nurses and paramedics. This provided those who attended the tools they needed to go out and use ImPACT in their communities.

Beckenhauer is pleased with the progress being made to bring general awareness to the seriousness of concussions. "Concussions don't just

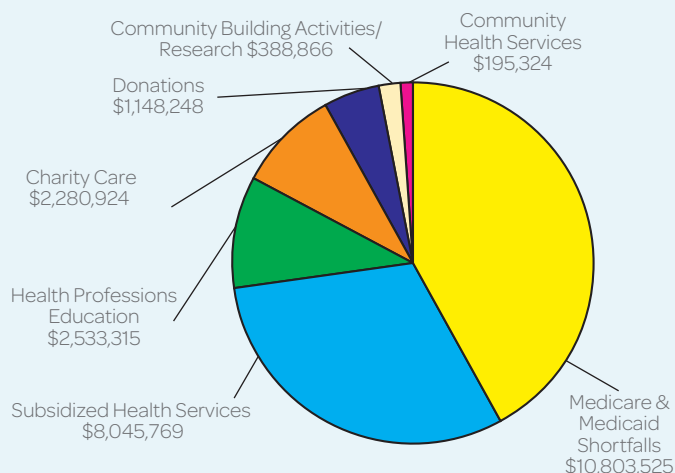
happen on the football field. They can happen anywhere, doing any type of activity; such was the case with Maddie,” Beckenhauer says. “We are seeing more and more how it can affect a person’s life, especially in the younger person. Some concussions can be minor, but many are significant and can really affect someone’s life. This awareness has made a big impact on our community.”

Athletes who have suffered a concussion are at risk for second impact syndrome in which additional trauma to the head could cause permanent brain damage or even death.

THE HEALING PROCESS

Maddie is back on the dance floor. That in itself brings a smile to her face. And for her mom, the experience has been an eye opener. “She has been through so much trying to catch up at school and getting back to her normal activities, but it’s so good to see the old Maddie back.”

2011 Unreimbursed Community Benefit: \$25,395,971



PROVIDING NOT-FOR-PROFIT CARE

As a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization Salina Regional Health Center is held in trust to benefit the community. Salina Regional has an obligation to provide vital services to the north central Kansas region. Our focus is on increasing access to quality healthcare services and adding value to the area.

TITHE TO FOUNDATION SUPPORTS MANY AREA HEALTH INITIATIVES

Each year, Salina Regional Health Center tithes a portion of its operating margin to the Salina Regional Health Foundation. In 2011 the hospital tithed 10 percent of its operating margin to support Foundation efforts such as the Community Health Investment Program (CHIP); scholarships for the KU School of Medicine site in Salina; and a patient assistance fund, which provides qualified patients with items like transportation and medication assistance when they have no other means.

CHIP primarily supports initiatives affecting the health of children. In 2011 CHIP awarded 15 grants totaling more than \$646,000.

One grant paid on the second year of a three-year, \$1 million commitment to the Donna L. Vanier Children’s Center, which is scheduled for a summer 2012 completion. The Children’s Center will serve as the new home for three separate but interrelated programs, including the Salina Child Care Association, Child Advocacy and Parenting Services (CAPS), and Salina Regional’s Infant-Child Development Program.

Another grant gave \$100,000 to strengthen four community foundations in the region that are participating in the Kansas Health Foundation Grow II initiative. Grow II offers a 50 percent match to endow gifts to public health. As participants in the program,



A CHIP grant funded half of a program at Salina elementary schools aimed at getting children to complete distances equal to a marathon. (Photo by Tom Dorsey/Salina Journal)

foundations representing the Lindsborg community, and Ellsworth, Lincoln and Ottawa counties each received \$25,000 from CHIP and then an additional \$12,500 from Grow II to support these public health endowments.

An \$18,000 grant to the Greater Salina Community Foundation provided matching funds for a School Marathon Program at seven Salina elementary schools last fall. More than 1,700 students ran distances equal to a marathon (26.2 miles). Some ran before school, others at recess, and all students participated through physical education classes. All participating students, as well as school staff and family members, realized the health benefits from increased activity during the program.

“We are tracking both classroom benefits and social benefits of the marathons,” says Betsy Wearing, president and executive director of the Greater Salina Community Foundation. “Students showed increased academic performance, higher physical fitness scores and better classroom behaviors. We appreciate Salina Regional’s support and are excited to expand the program next year to include more schools.”