What’s Inside …

Page 5
Opportunity of a lifetime: Olympic torch

Page 6
Kansas statewide electronic health information exchange

Page 7
Kansas Recruitment & Retention Center job listing

Page 15
Ready or not, here they come ... Kansas communities get a visit from the ERV

Page 16
Rural Health Care Provider Spotlight - Tyler Hughes, M.D.

Page 18
Improving outcomes for sepsis in rural Kansas

Page 20
Keeping the next generation engaged: Camp Med

KSCP encourages concussion education, awareness, and action

The Kansas Sports Concussion Partnership focuses on providing information for all involved in concussion management

Twenty-one-year-old Brandan Downs has an extra pair of sunglasses stashed in most of his friends’ and family members’ cars to ensure he always has a pair on hand. It may seem like a small thing, but it’s one of the details Downs has to remember due to eye sensitivity from lasting effects of multiple concussions.

Downs began playing tackle football in second grade. He sustained his first concussion in fifth grade and had four additional recorded concussions over the years.

“They were all different,” Downs said of his concussions. “I noticed after my last one that it was harder for me to read, I noticed having to make adjustments. I had a bunch of other issues and I’ve had friends who have had a lot more problems than me.”

Downs chose to end his football career in 2010, fresh into the start of his second season of college football.

“I didn’t want to come to the point where if I had one more big hit, it would be one too many,” said Downs. “I couldn’t do that to my parents. Concussions shouldn’t be

Brandan Downs in his football gear in 2009. Downs chose to end his college football career in 2010 after multiple concussions.

Concussion continued on page 3
One of my biggest goals in being a part of the KSCP is to eliminate any confusion in the management of a concussion,” said Koontz. “I want everyone on the entire team to be able to identify a possible concussion and know the next steps that need to be taken to achieve the best possible outcomes. We may not be able to live in a world where absolutely zero concussions occur, but I think we can continue to work to improve our care to minimize adverse consequences.”

While Koontz often is contacted early on, Bart A. Grelinger, M.D., a neurologist with Neurology Consultants of Kansas in Wichita, has seen how there can be a delay in athletes seeking help.

“Unfortunately by the time I see patients in my neurology practice, the injury has already begun to cause them problems at home, in school, at work, and with their relationships,” said Grelinger, who serves as the KSCP chair. “I have had several high school students who have missed a semester or more of school or dropped their dreams of going to college, due to memory and cognitive difficulties, following mild traumatic brain injury or concussion.”

Recognizing and acting on the early signs and giving the brain and central nervous system a chance to recover are vitally important. Education about removing the athlete from harm’s way and preventing a second injury during the recovery process are part of the primary mission of the KSCP.

“I have had several high school students who have missed a semester or more of school or dropped their dreams of going to college, due to memory and cognitive difficulties, following mild traumatic brain injury or concussion.”

Bart A. Grelinger, M.D.
"I would much rather see people sit out than take a hit that could end it."

Brandan Downs

Precaution and Understanding

“When in doubt, sit it out,” said Koontz.

It’s a principle that can be difficult for athletes and coaches to accept when the game is on the line or they aren’t sure if a break is necessary.

“A lot of people get upset if they have to sit out,” said Downs. “I would much rather see people sit out than take a hit that could end it.”

For Downs, the multiple concussions left long-lasting effects but also a plan on using his past to his benefit. Downs is currently studying exercise science at Wichita State University and he hopes to use his perspective to coach and train athletes in a safer way to play.

“I want to become a coach for little kids,” said Downs. “I want to teach them to tackle right.”

Koontz said she is encouraged by the increased awareness and understanding that coaches and athletes are showing and what it means for those who could be affected by a concussion.

“It is great to see a coach recognize that a student may have a headache, dizziness, balance difficulty or confusion and pull him or her out of the game,” said Koontz. “It is extremely important that we continue to spread the message that a concussion, even though it is not always visible, is a very serious injury that can often be treated successfully with good and immediate treatment.”


Prompted by a concern raised by urologist and father Jay Gilbaugh, Jr., M.D., in 2010, the Medical Society of Sedgwick County (MSSC) Board of Directors approved contacting the Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHAA) about better protecting athletes.

This action started discussion and formation of what would eventually become the Kansas Sports Concussion Partnership (KSCP).

KSCP chair Bart A. Grelinger, M.D.—a Wichita neurologist with Neurology Consultants of Kansas, who has more than 20 years in practice—explained what led him to get involved in this project and to advocate for the state law that is now in place.

“I have had the opportunity to lecture locally and nationally on concussion and mild traumatic brain injury for the past 10 years or more.

“A little over a year ago I became aware that Travis Francis, a local athletic trainer, had proposed a bill in Topeka [Senate Bill 33: School Sports Head Injury Prevention Act] designed to have concussed athletes and students evaluated by a physician prior to returning to practice or game play. With this I was given a chance to testify at the State Senate, helping to get this bill passed. This bill became a state law last late last spring.

“While preparing for my testimony, I had a chance to review the large volume of rapidly-changing material on sports head injury on the internet and found it daunting. It became clear we needed to help simplify this process for the physicians who would be dealing with this directly. With the help of the medical society, interested parties were gathered from multiple specialties including: family practice, sports medicine, surgery, emergency medicine, neurology, neuropsychology, athletic training, and nursing.

“During this process we chose the name Kansas Sports Concussion Partnership as we were setting up a website [www.KansasConcussion.org]. Hopefully this website provides up to date, accurate, and brief synopsis of all the currently available information. This not only provides education for the physician who may need to brush up on this topic but also provides tools to:

1. Help recognize concussion, allowing them to remove these students from further injury.
2. Monitor and manage the athlete as they improve.
3. Help return them back to the classroom and active play.

“The partnership plans to review the literature yearly and make any changes necessary to keep this website as current and useful as possible. It currently includes information for physicians, coaches and athletic trainers, teachers, schools, nurses, parents, and athletes.

“As physicians, our goal is the health of our patients, our state and our society. Education may be the most powerful tool we have to help reduce concussions in sports and limit potential disability.”