Important Changes to Pre-Hospital Care

North Allegheny is committed to providing our student athletes with the most current and superior care when it comes to sports related injury. As part of this commitment, our sports medicine team participates in continuing education, research, and stays abreast on changes in national and local regulations in standards of care so that our emergency action plan, protocols, and practice are up to date and evidence-based.

One of the most significant changes has occurred this year with regards to treatment of the spine injured athlete. In the past, the use of a spine board was common practice. Additionally, protective equipment was only to be removed if the facemask could not be removed in a reasonable amount of time or if the helmet and chin strap allowed movement in the cervical spine.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Health, immobilization on a spine board may cause pain, agitation, respiratory compromise, and pressure ulcers. Therefore, new standards of care not only limit the use of spine boards, but also require that protective sports equipment (helmet, shoulder pads, etc.) be removed prior to transport by 3 trained rescuers. There are still many scenarios in which spinal motion restriction with a spine board is warranted. For more specifics on the appropriate uses for spine boards and more information on these changes in standards of care, please review the PA Department of Health’s “Spinal Care: Statewide BLS Protocol” and the National Athletic Trainers Associations consensus statement, “Appropriate Care of the Spine Injured Athlete”.