

Alliance with the Medical Society of the State of New York

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Our Mission:
to support our physicians and promote health in our communities

MSSNY Council – Alliance Report **Thursday, November 4, 2021**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our Fall Conference was once again held virtually on October 19th.

The Alliance has been fortunate enough to keep up with the challenges facing physicians in New York State through our ability to attend MSSNY Council and Committee meetings.

We recently received promising news regarding our cause to get “Mandatory Head Gear for Girls’ Lacrosse”. Please see the update that follows. Our Past President, Cheryl Stier has worked tirelessly to bring this issue to the forefront. The Alliance extends its thanks to MSSNY in supporting this effort.

The Alliance hopes that 2022 will bring the opportunity for us to meet in person at Physician Advocacy Day or at the MSSNY House of Delegates.

Please reach out to us if there is anything that we can assist you with in the future.

Wishing you all a very healthy and happy Holiday Season,

Sincerely,

Helena Mirza
Co-President AMSSNY

A brief synopsis of the MSSNY Alliance's efforts to mandate approved protective headgear in the sport of girls' lacrosse

Each year we watch without question as more than 300,000 female athletes step onto the lacrosse fields unprotected. The great debate over the allowance of headgear in the sport of girls' lacrosse has been ongoing for more than a decade. **In 2013 the MSSNY Alliance drafted a position statement on the importance of protective headgear for the girls' game. In 2015 MSSNY HOD and the AMA HOD passed resolutions in support of protective headgear in the sport of girls' lacrosse.**

A Brief Synopsis (2007- 2021)

2007 – US Lacrosse mandates hard helmets as protective gear for goalies

*2009 – Research findings by Dawn Comstock PhD, Professor of Epidemiology, Colorado School of Public Health reports that **“An estimated 47.9% of concussions girls’ sustained from being struck by a ball/cross/stick could have been prevented if girls had worn the same head protection as boys”***

2010 – The NY State Public High School Athletic Association entertained a helmet mandate, but tabled the conversation to allow time for US Lacrosse to work with researchers on developing appropriate headgear and improved officiating.

*2012 – Shane Caswell and researchers at George Madison University concluded that **most injuries on the varsity level of play were the result of unintentional stick to head contact.***

2013 – Maryland Legislators introduced a bill requiring girls under the age of 19 playing lacrosse to wear protective head gear. After heavy push back, the bill was dropped.

2013 – The Alliance with the Medical Society of the State of NY drafted and approved a position statement on the importance of mandating protective head gear in the sport of girls'/women's lacrosse.

*2014 – The W.A.C.K. study at Brown University measured head blows in girls' lacrosse and **concluded that headgear can be effective in reducing head accelerations.***

2014 – The Florida Public High School Athletic Association mandated protective head gear on the high School Level.

*2015 – The **Medical Society of the State of NY, and the American Medical Association House of Delegates pass resolutions in support of protective head gear in the girls' sport.** (MSSNY resolution 157, AMA H-470.955)*

*2015 - The first ASTM standard for protective headgear in the sport of girls' lacrosse is developed. **ASTM standard F3137 requires headgear to meet the following criteria:***

- 1. A drop test that simulates a 45-mph stick swing*
- 2. A 60mph ball impact test*
- 3. A deformation test to ensure level of flexibility*

2017 – **Researchers at the University of Connecticut support the need for protective headgear in the sport of girls' lacrosse.** (Acabchuk, Rebecca, et al.)

2017 – Hummingbird Sports and Cascade Sports produced and marketed headgear which met the US Lacrosse established ASTM Standard.

2017- The Public Schools Athletic League of NY City mandated helmets for girls' playing lacrosse.

2017 – A NY State Court ruled that former Hofstra University lacrosse player, Samantha Griebner, had grounds to proceed with her claim of “negligence” against Hofstra University and the NCAA for not permitting her to wear protective headgear while playing the sport.

2019 – The Brain Safety Alliance was formed by health professionals, coaches, players, and parents, to provide a central location for sharing information, testimonials, and research.
(www.brainsafetyalliance.com)

2019 – **NYU Langone Health researchers concluded that use of approved headgear was found to be effective at lowering head or face injuries and concussions.**

2020 – “It’s A No-Brainer” An Entrepreneur’s Battle to Reduce Concussions in Girls’ Lacrosse is published.

2020 – “**The Effects of Headgear in High School Girls’ Lacrosse**” a research study by Shane Caswell of George Mason University et al, reported in, **The Orthopedic Journal of Sports Medicine** concluded:

“...the use of lacrosse headgear was associated with a significant reduction in the magnitude of overall impacts sustained during game play” and “... wearing lacrosse headgear meeting the ASTM F3137 performance standard does not appreciably change game play behaviors, while it does reduce the magnitude of head accelerations...”

2021 - Landmark study by Dr. Daniel Herman et.al, collected data from **roughly 350,000 games/practices in over 30 States** and concluded that the overall concussion rate was **significantly higher** in the Non-Headgear Cohort:

“Findings indicate that concussion rates among high school girls’ lacrosse players not wearing headgear were 59% higher than those wearing headgear. These data support the use of protective headgear to reduce the risk of concussion among high school female lacrosse athletes”
<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.10.06.21264026v1.full-text>

“Follow the Science” has been a phrase we have heard time and again throughout the pandemic. If one “follows the science” on the importance of mandating protective headgear in the sport of girls’ lacrosse, the decision is a “no brainer”. Headgear makes a difference.

Headgear Reduces Concussions in High School Girls' Lacrosse, Study Shows

A University of Florida study includes data from roughly 350,000 games and practices in more than 30 states. Headgear for girls has been mandated in Florida since 2015 and remains hotly debated.



Lacrosse players from Edgewood High School and Satellite High School in Florida wore headgear when they faced off in March. Credit...Craig Bailey/Florida Today via Imagin Content Services, LLC



By **Bill Pennington**

Oct. 8, 2021

In 2015, without empirical evidence or data that supported the decision, Florida became the only state to require high school girls' lacrosse teams to wear protective headgear. Boys' lacrosse teams nationwide have worn hard-shell helmets for decades but girls, who play by rules that generally forbid contact, have mostly spurned headgear.

The Florida rule created an ongoing and [divisive debate](#) fueled by fears that the girls' game would become as rugged as hard-hitting boys' lacrosse. No other state has mimicked Florida's mandate in the last six years, and headgear has largely remained optional in girls' lacrosse.

But on Friday, in a landmark study that is likely to have widespread repercussions for the sport, researchers at the University of Florida who examined data from the last three girls' lacrosse seasons concluded that Florida's female high school players were significantly less likely to sustain concussions than their counterparts in states without a headgear requirement.

The study, unique in its scope because it includes data from roughly 350,000 games and practices in more than 30 states, reported that girls playing in states without headgear mandates had a 59 percent higher concussion rate than players in Florida. Moreover, games were more dangerous than practices. Concussions rates were 74 percent higher during competitions among players in states without compulsory headgear use when compared with games played in Florida.

Dr. Daniel C. Herman, the study's lead researcher, called the finding, which will be presented Friday at the American Academy of Pediatrics national conference, "nothing but good news."

"Because we now know that helmets seem to be effective at reducing concussions in high school girls' lacrosse," Herman added. "We wanted to remove the emotion from the debate and focus on the data. Now there is something to inform policymaking decisions that affect athlete safety."

Todd Nelson, the assistant director of the New York State Public High School Athletic Association, said his group had been awaiting the results of the study, which he termed “significant.” Nelson said he hoped that USA Lacrosse, the sport’s national governing body, and the National Federation of State High School Associations would review the study’s conclusions and “possibly make some rule changes.”

“If they do not,” Nelson, whose association represents a lacrosse hotbed, said, “then our state association will look at that and possibly take some action.”

Ann Carpenetti, a USA Lacrosse vice president, called the study “compelling and very notable” and said she expected it to spawn considerable discourse nationwide. USA Lacrosse, which co-funded the study along with the National Operating Committee for Standards on Athletic Equipment, has not issued a headgear recommendation.

“It’s so new, we haven’t been able to even share the results with stakeholders and medical advisers,” said Carpenetti, whose organization spearheaded the establishment of standards for girls-specific lacrosse headgear several years ago. “Right now, we’re helping showcase evidence from a study that highlights the risk mitigation benefits of wearing headgear for girls high school lacrosse players.”

Carpenetti, however, added that she expected the topic will remain controversial within the sport’s circles and cautioned, as did Herman, that the new research did not address headgear use for girls younger than high schoolers, or for college players.

USA Lacrosse has scheduled a sport medicine symposium for Wednesday and Thursday, when the lead researchers of the Florida study will present their findings. It is also worth noting that no athletic headgear has proved to prevent all concussions. But in the case of lacrosse, headgear has been effective in reducing head trauma caused by stick-to-head or ball-to-head contact.

In roughly the past five years, as concerns about head injuries in youth sports have escalated, hundreds of U.S. school districts have made headgear compulsory at girls’ lacrosse games and practices. Two manufacturers, Cascade, the leading maker of boys’ lacrosse helmets, and Hummingbird Sports in New Jersey, have met the growing demand for lacrosse headgear designed for women.

But the pushback against headgear is staunch and well-connected since it includes many of the highest-level college coaches, who worry that the equipment will ruin the non-contact spirit of the girls’ game. Many fear that headgear use will subsequently lead to shoulder and elbow pads and heavily padded gloves, which are staples of the rough-and-tumble boys’ game. The more gear on the players, their theory goes, the more physical the sport becomes.

Lynn Millinoff, who recently retired after 14 years as the girls’ lacrosse coach at Buchholz High School in Gainesville, Fla., views Florida’s headgear era with a mix of emotions. She said the initial guidance from state officials was chaotic and confounding. She believes the players felt more emboldened and the game consequently grew rougher

with more serious injuries from the neck down. She said the headgear was still unpopular among players and worried about the effect on participation levels since each piece of headgear costs about \$150.

“But I’m torn,” Millinoff said Thursday. “I’ve seen some of the kids on my teams with concussions and it’s hard to watch that because they’re walking around in a cloud. It’s tough for everybody.”

As Concussion Worries Rise, Girls’ Lacrosse Turns to Headgear
Nov. 23, 2017

With Headgear Here, Girls’ Lacrosse Just Got Safer. Or Did It?
Oct. 28, 2016