



## **MD Finds His Niche Treating Concussed Patients and Serving as Expert Witness**

**By Chloe Scheller**

An athlete at heart, Andrew M. Blecher, MD always knew that sports were in his calling. Since the early age of eight, Blecher developed an interest in medicine, which perhaps, may have stemmed from his bloodline. His grandfather, an anesthesiologist, opened the doors to the medical world. “He took me into the operating room when I was 8 years old to watch him work. The rest, as they say, is history,” said Blecher. So it only made sense for Blecher to combine his passions for sports and medicine into one as he went on to pursue a career in sports medicine.

Along the way, Blecher has become a leading authority in the concussion industry.

Born and raised in New York, Blecher went for his undergrad at Williams College and later medical school at Tufts University School of Medicine in New York’s neighbor-state, Massachusetts. Blecher completed residency at UCLA’s Family Medicine program at Kaiser Permanente in Los Angeles.

During a sports medicine fellowship at the renowned Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Blecher provided medical assistance to the NFL Cleveland Browns and NBA Cleveland Cavaliers. His experience, however, did not stop there. Blecher also helped Cleveland’s professional hockey team and various NCAA Division I soccer, volleyball and wrestling programs. His time at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation sent him all over the world to provide medical aid for national and international events including the Gravity Games, the U.S. National Gymnastics Championships and the Ironman Triathlon in Kona, Hawaii.

Blecher is not only well-versed in an array of sports and the injuries that go along with them, he also provides care to athletes of all age groups. “My

workday is spent either in the office or on the sidelines seeing sports medicine patients from all walks of life, from little leaguers to professionals to weekend warriors to 80 year olds who still play golf,” said Blecher.



**Andrew Blecher**

### **Blecher Suffers a Concussion**

Blecher’s passion for sports medicine was coupled with a real-life understanding of sports injuries while attending medical school when he experienced a concussion from skiing. Dissatisfied with the care he received from a top neurologist, Blecher saw a need for experts in sports-related concussions. Now, with both office and sideline experience in assessing and managing concussed athletes; he has begun to lecture on the subject. Blecher has spoken at the National Summit on Sports Concussion and is one of three certified ImpACT consultants in the Los Angeles area. Sought after for his expertise, Blecher has been a treatment physician at the Los Angeles Summer X-Games to a medical consultant for ESPN.

Currently, Blecher is a primary care sports medicine doctor at the Southern California Orthopedic Institute, the medical director for the Center for Rehabilitation Medicine and the Director of the SCORE Concussion Program.

Blecher created the SCORE Concussion Program after he served as an expert witness in the Scotty Eveland case, a high school football player in San Marcos who suffered traumatic brain injury during a game. “I personally contributed to form a fund to provide baseline concussion testing as well as provide concussion health care insurance for every varsity football player of all of the high schools to which my practice serves as team physicians,” said Blecher. “I wanted to ensure that all of these kids would have the

means and the access to care by concussion experts in the event that they were injured. Through continued fund-raising we are able to maintain this pledge as well as provide seminars and other educational materials to coaches, athletic trainers, athletes and parents.”

Having first-hand experienced and seen the impacts of concussions, Blecher advocates for educating players and managing concussions in a more deliberate way. “Concussions are not preventable in contact and collision sports. But laws, rules, equipment, technique, strength, education and most importantly culture can all be changed to help reduce not only the incidence of concussion, but also the mismanagement of it,” Blecher said.

One example of mismanagement is the current misconception about the safety football helmets provide. Football helmets only minimally reduce impact to the skull but cannot guarantee protecting the brain. “They are making false and fraudulent claims if they state that they can prevent concussions. There has never been any evidence to prove this,” said Blecher. “It is important that we continue to educate athletes and parents about these fraudulent claims so as not to give them a false sense of security that they are

safe from concussions.”

Blecher urges that the way in which football is classified needs to be altered. “Boxing is more than a collision sport. It is a gladiator sport. I believe that football should be reclassified to the same category as well,” said Blecher. “Only then will we realize that football in that form can be appreciated for what it is at the professional level, but must be radically changed at the high school and youth level where underage kids are put at risk without the intellectual or legal ability to consent to the risks and consequences.”

Blecher is a diplomat of the American Board of Family Practice and an active member of the American Medical Society for Sports Medicine.

**Concussion Litigation Reporter** offers timely reporting on developments and legal strategies at the intersection of sports and concussions—articles that benefit practicing attorneys who may be pursuing a claim or defending a client. The newsletter is published monthly. To subscribe, please visit our website at <http://concussionpolicyandthelaw.com/subscribe/>

*Reprinted from Concussion Litigation Reporter, Volume 3, Issue 2, August 2014. Copyright © 2014 Hackney Publications.*