

Strength in Numbers: Oregon Concussion Law Includes DCs

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Building coalitions of interested stakeholders, including former foes, to pass legislation you want can be incredibly effective. The passage of [Oregon Senate Bill 1547](#) during a short 35-day legislative session is a perfect example. This new law adds chiropractic physicians, naturopathic physicians, physical therapists and occupational therapists to the list of qualified health professionals that can assess a concussed student athlete and provide a release to start the stepwise return-to-play protocols.

[Oregon Health and Sciences University](#) (OHSU) is producing a comprehensive online concussion return-to-play and learning course that all qualified health professionals must successfully complete. This evidence- and consensus-based course will be updated every four years in coordination with the International Consensus Meeting on Concussion in Sports. There will be no centralized registry of qualified health professionals; those who have successfully completed the course will self-identify with a certificate of completion.

We invited the naturopaths and physical therapists to join us, with a state senator who is also a medical doctor inviting the occupational therapists. Yes, like many of you we have had our share of battles with the physical therapists, namely over who can perform spinal manipulation and use the terms *physical therapy* or *physiotherapy*, with us losing the former and winning the latter battles. Many of your legislative members have a relationship with a naturopath, physical or occupational therapist, and that will serve you well as you lobby a legislative concept together.

One interesting benefit that came out of this legislation is a clear progression of our profession toward the goal of cultural authority. Early on, a state senator who is also a medical physician and adjunctive professor in primary care at OHSU was of the opinion that chiropractors aren't trained in concussion. However, strategically connecting this state senator with chiropractic sports physicians and a chiropractic board-certified functional neurologist changed her view.

To her credit, once exposed to our training and clinical skill sets, she completely reversed her view and opinion and became our strong political ally. She even helped us counter the opposition from the Oregon Medical Association, the Oregon Association of Orthopedic Surgeons, Osteopathic Physicians & Surgeons of Oregon, and the Oregon School Boards Association.

During one of the Senate Health Committee hearings, this senator / MD referred to one of our female chiropractic sports physicians as her good friend, a chiropractic physician and a concussion expert. It doesn't get any better.

Building coalitions of health care providers, even including groups you have battled against in the past, can be an effective tool to get what you want. Help enough people get what they want and you might just get what you want.

