

Sentinel

Soelter Provides Concussion Care

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FAIRMONT— Tim Soelter is a physician assistant in the orthopedics department at United Hospital District (UHD). He’s also a Credentialed imPACT Consultant (CIC). “I see all gamuts of orthopedic problems, from arthritis to any kind of sports injury and fractures. I like to do bone density as well, so osteoporosis is kind of my other specialty, along with concussion treatment,” Soelter said.

While not originally from the area, Soelter has called Fairmont home since 2000. He began working at Center for Specialty Care but has been with UHD for about four years.

“During that time, I got hooked up with the Fairmont football program when (head coach) Mat Mahoney came on,” Soelter said. He’s been doing athletic training for the football team for about 15 years. Soelter shared he really got interested in concussion management after his oldest son Andrew got a concussion. “I didn’t really know a lot about it, but he had a prolonged recovery and it got me interested in looking at concussions and how to treat them and what the protocol was for when it would be safe to get back in sports,” Soelter said.



Photo courtesy of Evan Taylor Studios

Tim Soelter, a PA-C at United Hospital District in Fairmont, is seen consulting with a patient. Soelter has a special interest in sports medicine and working with athletes.

He didn’t officially get credentialed until 2019 but had been doing the work through the imPACT program. Soelter explained that the imPACT program is a computerized test that anyone can take, from age 12 and up, that then supplies objective data on how the brain is functioning. If someone has a concussion, which is a dysfunction of the normal brain process, the data can be looked at to determine how bad the concussion is. “Sometimes those numbers give us an idea of how long we can expect the

recovery to be,” Soelter said.

When it comes to preventative measures, Soelter said that it’s hard to prevent a head injury, but that there’s all sorts of new technology out there that’s interesting. He said right now he’s working with the football team on doing baseline impact testing prior to the school season starting.

“All the kids get tested so they have a baseline so if they have an injury we can see how bad it is and whether they actually got a concussion. Then we can watch their progress and have a better timeline for recovery if we have that initial baseline,” Soelter said.

Along with football, Soelter said he’s seen concussions occur in other sports including soccer, basketball and volleyball. He pointed out they could happen in nearly any sport though they’re typically seen in high impact sports.

There is also protective gear for different sports, such as compression collars athletes can wear on their necks that puts back pressure on the carotid arteries that help with pressure in the brain. There are also special bands soccer players can wear on their heads for when doing headers to help prevent concussions.

Soelter said more education about head injuries and concussions is also out there and coaches are more aware of the impact a concussion has not only on someone physically but mentally with school and long-term problems with basic functioning if concussions aren’t treated properly.

“Obviously concussions happen in other places besides sports. When riding a bike or motorcycle we talk about the importance of wearing a helmet,” Soelter said. Common symptoms of concussions include headache, amnesia, dizziness and nausea, though there can be subtle signs of concussion too including irritability, trouble with sleep, distractions due to light and increased anxiety. “I take all head injuries seriously, even if they don’t all lead to a concussion,” Soelter said.

Anyone who experiences any symptoms of a concussion should get checked out.