

Bluffton University Sickle Cell Policy (Initiative)

Reason for Proactive Policy

The NCAA is recommending that all student athletes do ONE of the following beginning this academic year:

- 1) Confirm their sickle cell trait status via health records being that all 50 states test at birth
- 2) Have a simple, inexpensive blood test performed at their local healthcare facility to determine trait status
- 3) Decline the test, which waives an institution from being liable for any Sickle Cell Trait related situations

The NCAA has embarked on recommending sickle cell trait testing due to the deaths and lawsuits of student athletes in the past years. Seven sickle cell trait football deaths have been reported by the NCAA during 2000-2009. The most recent sickling death was a freshman defensive back at Rice University in the fall of 2006. The harder and faster athletes go, the earlier and greater the sickling begins. The complications associated with sickle cell trait are not limited to just football. Other levels of competitive sports have documented cases in distance racing and during “suicide sprints” on the court, laps on a track, or a long training run.

We, the Athletic Training Staff at Bluffton University, and member institutions of the Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference are being proactive in the protection of your son/daughter by instituting this policy in advance.

Background Information

During periods of intense exercise commonly seen in collegiate athletics, the sickle cell trait can change the shape of the red blood cells from round to quarter-moon or “sickle” shaped. When this occurs, these sickled red blood cells can “logjam” the blood vessels. Complications from sickling can be confused with other less serious conditions such as heat cramping but can cause serious health issues or even death if the athlete continues to attempt to struggle through the activity. Heat, dehydration, altitude, asthma, and other medical conditions may increase the risk for and worsen the sickling, even in light to moderate intensity workouts.

For more information on Sickle Cell Trait: <http://www.nata.org/statements/consensus/sicklecell.pdf>

Those at Risk

Inheritance and race determine your risk of carrying the sickle cell trait. Approximately 1:12 African Americans will be a carrier of the sickle cell gene. Conversely, only about 1:2000 to 1:10,000 white Americans will be carriers of the gene. Those of Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, Indian, Caribbean, South American, and Central Americans may also be at higher risk for having the sickle gene.

Check ONE of the following:

I knowingly have the Sickle Cell Trait and will abide by the advice of the Sports Medicine Staff with my participation in athletics. **(Student Athlete can NOT be disqualified from participation for having the trait)**

I am unaware of my Sickle Cell Trait status and will not hold Bluffton University liable for any Sickle Cell Trait related conditions that may occur because of my participation in athletics.

If you would like further information, please ask the Sports Medicine Staff.

Print Name

Date

Participant Signature

Date