

## Football Lingo in the Medical World



### To the Editor:

Although Alpert's recent editorial<sup>1</sup> on the use of baseball lingo in the medical world knocked the discussion over the fence, one might question whether it carried fair or foul. In the southeastern United States, in our experience, football reigns as the supreme sport.

In our region, it is often said that there are but 2 seasons: football season and waiting for it. Devotion to the sport is noted by the common recognition of simple phrases or places. The tomahawk chop, the gator chomp, cowbells, the 12th man, Big Orange, Toomer's Corner, between the hedges, and other expressions need no further description. Anyone who has ever experienced tailgating on a Saturday afternoon in the Grove understands.

The week between games is spent on review and preview of past and upcoming contests. Inevitably, football jargon permeates the workplace, including the medical world.

Healthcare personnel are encouraged to be "team players." There are "turnovers" at shift change and "huddles" to discuss discharge planning and bed assignments. To avoid "dropping the ball," there are "time-outs" in the operating room in an effort to avoid future penalties. Charts may be "flagged" and sent "for further review."

Presentations and roundsmanship provide other opportunities as long as one has a "game plan." Although anxiety

may lead to a "false start," students and residents often "milk the clock" when poorly prepared and hope they do not "fumble" if "blindsided" by a question. If their colleagues fail to "intercept" the question, they will try at least for a "deflection" by "lateraling" to their peers and hoping that someone else will "carry the ball."

If a patient needs no change in current management, we "hold the line," although "Monday morning quarterbacks" may later determine that a different course of action was warranted. Unfortunate situations with little hope are said to be "fourth and long," and it is not unusual for a "hail Mary" to be attempted in such situations.

As with gridiron contests, this conversation has 2 sides. Medical terms have become commonly used as football clichés as well. The "rabid" fans have "infectious" enthusiasm as they watch their quarterback throw a "surgical strike" and "operate" the offensive plan with "surgical precision." The defense must often "stop the bleeding" for their team to "recover."

Football fever seems to be endemic among certain populations in the southeastern United States and seems to be more common in the fall. Utterings of related colloquialisms may be frequently encountered.

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## Reference

1. Alpert JS. Baseball lingo in the medical world. *Am J Med.* 2014; 127:801.