

NATA Education Think Tank Highlights

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The following is a brief review of selected topics discussed on the NATA Think Tank Educator Forum. Only NATA members can access the archived messages and discussions. To view this forum, go to <http://forum.nata.org/thinktanks> (login required).

Defining Ourselves (January 28, 2009 – 5 postings)

The NATA defines athletic training as a profession that seeks to “. . . optimize activity and participation of patients and clients . . . (and) encompasses the prevention, diagnosis, and intervention of emergency, acute and chronic conditions involving impairment, functional imitations, and disabilities.” (http://www.nata.org/about_AT/terminology.htm, 2007). Using these tenants as a guide, it is important to always practice correct and current professional terminology in all forms of communication – written, verbal, electronic, and visual. This will help us define ourselves to help others (i.e., public, medical personnel, insurance companies) understand who we are and what we do.

Looking at the NATA's definition, some individuals may not view athletic trainers as professionals who optimize activity and participation, which is more often the purview of a personal trainer or coach. However, it is undeniable that the athletic trainer does prevent and treat injuries, which would promote participation and optimize activity. This same definition neglects to mention physical rehabilitation, but it is understood within the profession that "intervening" in an emergent, acute, or chronic condition should include treatment and rehabilitation. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for public perception to be guided by articles, photos, news videos, and interviews that emphasize taping, spine boarding, or fluid replacement over more allied-health professional injury recognition and care skills.

The NATA tries to de-emphasize the term athlete because it limits our scope of practice to traditional athletics. However, we are

qualified to work in several fields, and our professional practice definition reflects that. While some athletic trainers feel that this updated definition focuses more on the non-traditional setting than the traditional athletic setting that gave the profession its roots, it is encouraging to see the field evolve and create near limitless unique opportunities for its members to serve as physician extenders, in the military, in industry, and many other settings. However, it remains disappointing that the general public easily recognizes the roles of physical therapists, EMTs and nurses, but does not understand what we do, the licensing required as bona fide healthcare professionals, and the stringent accreditation process required for our collegiate educational programs. This may best be improved by athletic trainers always using accurate terminology and professional titles, correcting misunderstandings when they happen, and taking an active role to educate the public and other allied health professionals.

ALT for Undergrad AT Students (February 4, 2008 – 7 postings)

Academic learning time (ALT) is an important educational concept in entry-level athletic training programs that seeks to make the best use of students' time at their clinical sites. During down time at clinical sites, clinical instructors should facilitate discussions and peer-learning interactions with other athletic training students. While experiencing the clinical site's patient interactions is critical for student growth, the unstructured time should also be used advantageously.

To create the maximum amount of ALT, ATCs can ask students to bring several specific questions they have from class or other materials associated with athletic training each week. Typically, these questions lead to other questions, and this provides an excellent learning experience for the students throughout the week. If students are proactive and take an active role in their education, the ATCs will serve more as facilitators than imparters of knowledge. When students say, 'I am bored, teach me something,' they'll need to change their behaviors or find another major.

Another idea is simply ask the question "why?" to anyone – classmate, younger student, older or grad student, staff athletic trainer, or professor. Sometimes the answer may be as simple as "The literature shows us . . ." Other times students may have to work harder to find the answer. Another common answer may be, "Because it has always been done this way." Students and ATCs are encouraged to share what they learn from books and research, as long as you keep an open mind and discuss why you are doing or



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not doing something. Another good time to ask why is after practices or events.

ATCs can also provide mock scenarios, give hands-on experiences, and ask “what would you do?” questions. Both ATCs and students are busy, but maximizing down time in will allow students to take full advantage of their clinical education experience.

Interesting Websites

NATA Position Statements

<http://www.nata.org/statements>

Free Worksheets

<http://www.freeworksheets.com>

Ericae – Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation

<http://ericae.net>

Teaching Tips Index

<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/teachtip.htm>

DermAtlas

<http://www.dermatlas.org/derm>

MedMark – Health and Medicine Directory

<http://www.medmark.org/os/os2.html>

Medical Matrix – Clinical Medicine Resources

<http://www.medmatrix.org/index.asp>

Nicholas Institute of Sports Medicine and Athletic Trauma

<http://www.nismat.org>