

A Look to the Future, but First a Look Back at Our Past

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The *Athletic Training Education Journal (ATEJ)* was established in 2006. Editor-in-Chief Kenneth Knight implored us to “nurture it and guide its growth.”^{1(p1)} Looking back to that first issue in January 2006, we have seen the *ATEJ* provide a platform for scholars and educators to publish their research, innovative ideas, and best practices in education. The journal has had steadfast leadership in the Editor-in-Chief role, starting with Ken Knight and followed by William Pitney, Kimberly Peer, and David Berry. Educators at heart, they brought their individual passions and visions to the journal that have allowed it to flourish over the last 18 years. We would be remiss in failing to thank them for guiding the journal and advocating for its value in our profession.

As the journal prepares to move forward and embark on a journey of change, it is important to acknowledge the *ATEJ*'s roots, struggles, and growth.

Our Roots

With the intention to provide an outlet for topics that advance educational practices for the student, preceptor, and educator, the *ATEJ* was born. In 2006, the mission of the journal was

... to enhance health care by advancing athletic training education. Toward this end, the journal serves as an interface between the theory and practice of athletic training education by providing a forum for scholars, educators, and clinicians to share critical and significant concepts, original research, and innovative ideas.¹

The mission has changed slightly over time, but the *ATEJ* has continued to solicit “high-quality scholarly works that will address and advance the continuum of teaching and learning from educational preparation to professional development and continuing education.”

Since 2006, the journal has published 406 papers, which were reviewed by more than 330 athletic training educators, scholars, and practitioners. These papers include original research, literature reviews, educational techniques, and commentaries. In publishing these papers, the *ATEJ* has most definitely accomplished the goals established by Ken Knight to advance the field of athletic training pertaining to teaching, curriculum design, and development and maintain a rigorous review process and by Kim Peer to demonstrate a commitment to excellence through teamwork (section editors, editorial board members, reviewers, and editorial staff), scholarly intrigue, and lifelong learning.² As a part of this commitment, educational programming through the Athletic Training Education Conference and workshops facilitated training and encouraged involvement of scholars at all levels of their careers.

Bill Pitney eloquently stated, “we [the journal] cannot operate effectively without good personnel.”³ As we look to the future, the journal will continue to rely on the leadership team and editorial staff to, in Ken Knight's words, “nurture and guide its growth.”^{1(p.1)}

The Struggles

Despite the success of the *ATEJ*, we have recently experienced challenges, including delays in publication, difficulty finding reviewers, and fewer submissions. As Dave Berry shared, time to publication was a challenge with a quarterly journal, often resulting in a 3- to 6-month publication process for accepted articles.⁴ A move to continuous publication has speeded up the process, offering benefits to both authors and readers; this, however, does not mean that challenges do not exist with publication delays.

A fair amount of pressure is placed on the peer reviewer community, as they help maintain and uphold the journal's rigor as well as help maintain the flow of publications for the journal. Reviewers are a limited resource, and although we are not alone with struggles to find individuals to complete the peer review process, we have certainly been guilty of overusing the pool of reviewers, which has often contributed to those publication delays mentioned above.⁵

Despite publishing over 400 papers, in the last few years, a marked decline in the number of submissions has occurred (Figure). Many of the authors who submitted to the journal have secured tenure, reducing the need and frequency to publish in *ATEJ*, but also the journal is not yet indexed, thus limiting its ability to have an impact factor, and for many early career faculty, impact factors influence where authors may choose to submit their work.

The Future

Growth comes with the need for reflection and, of course, change. The journal leadership is embarking on the revamp of the *ATEJ* in the form of a name change and an expansion of the journal's scope. In June 2025, the journal will become known as the *Journal of Athletic Training-Education and Practice (JAT-EP)*. The National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) Prioritized Research Agenda for the Athletic Training Profession identified the research priorities for the athletic training profession, many of which directly align with our new mission:

To publish peer-reviewed, high-quality scholarly works addressing the broad topics affecting athletic training educators and practitioners. The journal disseminates scholarly works to advance knowledge about the vitality

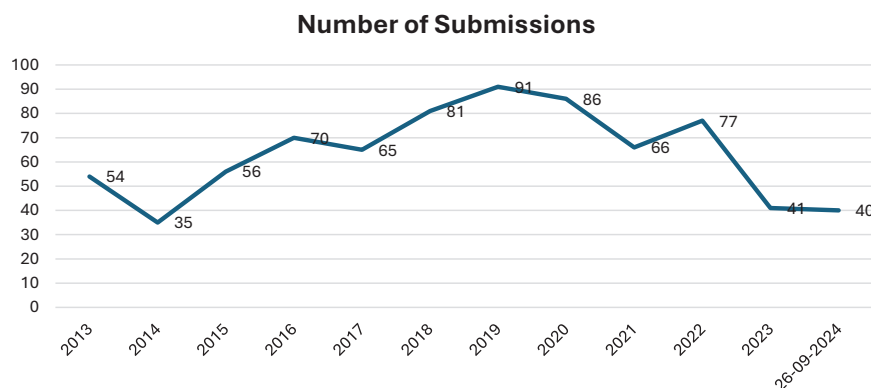


Figure. Article submissions to *ATEJ*.

of the profession, education, and health care competency. The *JAT-EP*'s goal is to contribute significantly to health care by focusing on teaching and learning for the clinician, educator, preceptor, and program administrator. The journal promotes innovation within health care education and clinical practice.⁶

When I accepted the position of Editor-in-Chief, I committed to moving the journal forward with a central focus on obtaining indexing in scholarly databases. As mentioned previously, the journal has faced a decline in submissions, likely in part due to the lack of impact factor. By expanding the scope of the journal, we can capture content often submitted to the *Journal of Athletic Training* but rejected or referred to other non-NATA journals or athletic training-focused ones.

In addition, I pledged to provide a platform for new and young scholars and reviewers while also improving the diversity and breadth of knowledge being disseminated in the journal. By expanding the range of journal topics that align with the NATA's Prioritized Research Agenda, I believe that the revamp will allow us to achieve these additional identified goals. I am excited for the future of the journal and hope that you embrace the change as a sign of

the collective evolution of the *Journal of Athletic Training* and the newly coined *JAT-EP*.

As we begin this new chapter, I welcome your comments and suggestions (stephanie.m.singe@uconn.edu).

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