



# COSMF Newsletter

## The Benefits of Athletic Training Residencies and Fellowships

Mark Laursen, MS, ATC (Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education)

*Editor Note: Appreciation to Mark Laursen, MS, ATC, the Director of Residency and Fellowship for the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) for preparing this article. Please contact him at [Mark@caate.net](mailto:Mark@caate.net) to learn more about the CAATE and how to initiate an accredited athletic training residency or fellowship program.*

Athletic training residency and fellowship programs are designed to advance the clinical skills of athletic trainers and educate a new generation of highly skilled health care professionals. They provide the learners with specialized knowledge and expertise in an area of specialty/subspecialty practice, enabling the athletic trainer to provide advanced, high-quality health care to patients.

There are currently eight specialty areas for athletic training residencies: orthopedics, rehabilitation, performance enhancement, behavioral health, pediatrics, primary care, prevention and wellness, and urgent and emergent care. Additional residency and fellowship areas can be created through a proposal process.

Residencies and fellowships can benefit athletic trainers and your practice. Those benefits include practice efficiency, synergy with other learners in the practice, and development of current staff. They can also be a source for future staff hiring.

### Improving Practice Efficiency with Athletic Trainers

Athletic trainers have been shown to increase patient throughput for a practice, allowing for more efficient patient care.<sup>1</sup> By hiring residency-trained athletic trainers, practices can improve physician satisfaction. A study concluded that ATs improved clinical efficiency by increasing patient throughput and decreasing nonessential physician interaction and documentation time while maintaining the overall total time spent with the patient.<sup>1</sup>

Patients perceive no difference between the services provided by residency-trained athletic trainers and orthopedic

residents, and athletic trainers have been found to improve efficiency in primary care practices through their specialized knowledge and skillset.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, athletic training learners abide by ACGME duty hours. This allows them to participate in community outreach programs, further enhancing the practice's referral base, reputation, and connection with the local community.

### Synergy with Other Learners in the Practice

Athletic training residencies and fellowships create synergy with other learners in the practice. By combining grand rounds and journal clubs, residency/fellowship programs can create a collaborative learning environment where different health care professionals share their expertise and insights. This promotes interdisciplinary collaboration and improves patient care by integrating different perspectives and approaches.

Furthermore, athletic training learners are required to complete scholarship-quality improvement projects, data collection, and dissemination. This enhances their own knowledge and skills but also contributes to the research and evidence-based practices within the practice.

Licensed athletic trainers make excellent preceptors for Family Practice Residents on their sports medicine rotation. If your practice takes athletic training professional students for clinical rotations, athletic training learners can serve as preceptors.

### Staff Development: Current and Future

Athletic Trainers historically developed, and were trained, as generalists taking care of the medical needs of physically active individuals in multiple settings. As the profession has evolved, and accredited residencies and fellowships further that evolution.

(Continued on page 15)



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(Continued from page 14)

Accredited athletic training residencies and fellowships play a crucial role in staff and learner development, for both current and future health care professionals, including physician learners. Athletic Training residencies and fellowships help in the professional development of those athletic trainers serving as core faculty and affiliate faculty. They allow you to orient and evaluate athletic trainers for future full-time positions.

Accredited athletic training residency and fellowship programs benefit all involved-- from program personnel, patients, and athletic training learners to their future patients-- because the quality standards set forth by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) ensure the improved outcomes for athletic trainers and patients.

1. Pecha, Forrest & Omdal, Reed & Koen, Sandra & Wick, John. (2017). Athletic Trainers' Role in Improving Efficiency in the Primary Care Setting. *The Journal of medical practice management: MPM*. 33.
2. Pecha, Forrest & Nicolello, Tim & Xerogeanes, John & Karas, Spero & Labib, Sameh. (2015). Patient Perceptions of Athletic Trainers and Orthopaedic Medical Residents as Primary Clinical Support Staff in Sports Medicine Practice: A Randomized, Double-Blinded Prospective Survey. *Journal of allied health*. 44. 225-228.

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*\*The following member types are eligible for installment payments: Fellows, Specialty Fellows, Candidates, Associates, and Senior members.*

