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Athletic Training: From the Clinic to the Classroom

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Introduction

The purpose of this practicum experience was to evaluate the importance of immersing a practicing clinical certified athletic trainer (ATC) into the classroom setting in a CAATE accredited athletic training education program. The ATC was responsible for facilitating student communication with other ATCs in an effort to reduce the stress of classroom assignments on clinical ATCs and develop an effective method for students to accomplish directed clinical observations.

The ATC also worked alongside professors to learn and understand how to develop classroom lecture material, as well as interactive, hands-on laboratory experiences for students. The goal for the ATC was to gain confidence in delivering information in a lecture format as opposed to a traditional clinical setting.

Goals

- **Serve as the primary contact for freshmen athletic training students within the athletic training room and facilitate directed observation hours and service hours**
 - Develop universal system for tracking student observations that can be accessed by athletic training faculty and staff to reduce stressors on both students and clinical athletic training staff
- **Maintain weekly office hours/attend supplemental instructor sessions for students to seek further help within the course(s)**
- **Develop evidence-based and textbook-based lecture material covering therapeutic modalities and taping techniques and become confident delivering educational lectures to students**
- **Assist professor(s) in developing and delivering hands-on lab activities related to course content to deliver material to students in an immersive setting**
 - Develop and conduct lab activities to maximize student creativeness and immersion into the athletic training profession

Impacts

- ATC's role as primary contact for freshmen athletic training students:
 - Students felt more comfortable and welcome in the athletic training room
 - Students were given more opportunity to complete directed observation hours and able to experience directed observations in a more immersive way
 - Directed observation hour system proved to be effective in providing student experience and reliability, and providing organization for all students, faculty and staff
- ATC as a classroom instructor versus clinician
 - Large difference between clinical and classroom instructor
 - Clinical instruction is "hands-on" as opposed to classroom instruction which relies heavily on verbal delivery
 - ATC was more comfortable and confident in a laboratory setting as opposed to classroom setting
 - Student engagement was easier to obtain in a hands-on laboratory setting as opposed to lecture setting



Possible Limitations

- Time Management
 - Maintaining role of clinician and classroom educator simultaneously is time consuming for the ATC
 - Work-life balance may be sacrificed in order to maintain role as clinician and classroom educator
- Difficulty of Material Assignment
 - Level of difficulty for student assignments was challenging for ATC to assign and differentiate due to unfamiliarity with student knowledge and comprehension
- Lack of Formal Education Training

Benefits

- Students
 - Receive education from ATC who is currently practicing in the field as opposed to learning from ATC who has not practiced clinically for an extended period
- Certified Athletic Trainer
 - Able to have an understanding of the classroom setting of athletic training to better translate and provide effective clinical learning to athletic training students

Discussion

The importance of the presence of a currently practicing clinical athletic trainer in the curriculum of a CAATE accredited athletic training education program is beneficial for both the athletic trainer and students. Students are provided with daily classroom and clinical learning from a licensed healthcare professional in which they can learn effective, up-to-date medical interventions which are being utilized within the profession to coincide with traditional classroom learning. While the experience proved to be challenging for the athletic trainer, the ATC grew more confident in delivering information in a classroom lecture format, as well as being able to develop evidence-based classroom material for enhanced student learning.

Outside of the classroom, the ATC proved to be effective in providing a welcoming and supportive environment for freshmen athletic training students, as well as providing organization and student-accountability with the development of a documentation system.