Pre-Season: A Time To Get Student Athletic Trainers Ready

Thomas G. Weidner, PhD, ATC

ABSTRACT: Often we simply assume that student athletic trainers are prepared. This article discusses a two-session program for student athletic trainers which is conducted several days before both the fall and spring athletic seasons. An orientation session is held for new athletic training students and is designed to inform them about the athletic training program requirements, retention policies, and philosophy, and about the operations of the athletic training room. In addition, an in-service session for all athletic training students is given to provide practice in responding to many emergency and acute injury care situations. Senior students in the athletic training program are the primary instructors in this workshop. Both parts of the program are instrumental in providing a clear understanding of the diverse goals our staff members are trying to accomplish.

Just prior to the wave of new fall or spring athletic seasons, much attention is given to pre-participation exams, supply inventories, facility readiness, and the like. Commonly during the time, however, many of us make the assumption that our returning student athletic trainers have retained their emergency care skills and that our new students know everything they need to know about our training rooms. The purpose of this article is to describe an orientation and in-service program designed to prepare students for the upcoming athletic seasons by reviewing appropriate athletic training competencies.

ORIENTATION PROGRAM

A two-session program is conducted several days before athletes return to campus from their summer or winter breaks. For two hours in the morning, new student athletic trainers are oriented both to the athletic training program they are just beginning and to the operations of the training room. This program always begins by introducing present staff members and sharing some of our backgrounds and outside interests. This time helps to reduce some of the initial clumsiness that results from not knowing each other. Approximately one hour is then spent in presenting the essential details of the athletic training program. Pertinent items include the following:

1. Program requirements (primarily a discussion of the various academic and clinical experiences the student can expect — e.g., coursework, rotations through physical therapy, orthopedic surgery observations, possible high school assignments, etc.)
2. Retention policy for both the coursework and clinical aspects of the program (a blank end-of-semester clinical evaluation form is contained in the student trainer manual given to all students for their later review and familiarization).
3. Program philosophy (to the extent possible, a feeling is created regarding professionalism in and out of the training room, commitment to the program and profession as a whole, care and concern for the athletes, and compliance to the procedures of the program).

Afterwards, students spend approximately 45 minutes on athletic training room familiarization, which includes a brief overview of the records and forms used in the training room, a detailed tour of the facilities, and a scavenger hunt completed by each student for 20 or more items located in the training room (1). The orientation closes with a question and answer period led by a senior student athletic trainer and the program director to address student concerns and inquiries. Most of the information covered above can be found in the student trainer manual given to each of the students during the orientation. In addition, each new student receives other materials, such as applications to the NATA and state athletic trainers' association, progress and skill competency check lists, and the NATA's Competences in Athletic Training.

IN-SERVICE PROGRAM

The second session of the day lasts approximately four hours and is held in the afternoon for all student athletic trainers. This in-service meeting begins by introducing the new students to the others, which serves to “break the ice” for them and hastens their assimilation into the group. Introductions are followed by general remarks and announcements which function to reiterate the philosophy and operation of the program as well as to highlight the upcoming special learning events of the semester (e.g., state association meeting, local conferences, etc.). With everyone well-informed, a sense of organization and control prevails among the group. Next, a short quiz is usually given on a topic which the students have been given in advance. This activity, and the student athletic trainers' preparation for it, is intended to get them thinking about athletic training again. Student class schedules are recorded and gathered to be used in making training assignments for the new semester. Also, students' current addresses and telephone numbers are assembled into a directory to be given to everyone in the program.

The primary portion of the in-service is a practical, ‘hands-on’ review of pertinent emergency and acute injury management procedures. This workshop-type activity consists of the following:

1. CPR — practiced on a resusci-Anne;
2. scoop stretcher and spine board usage;
3. Sports Chair transport;
4. splint and immobilizer application;
5. crutch fitting and usage.

One other miscellaneous skill is also practiced, such as record-keeping, knee brace application, or wound care techniques. During a recent in-service, the team physician spoke...
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<tr>
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<th>Each tablet contains:</th>
<th>%USRDA*</th>
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<td>(Calcium Gluconate)</td>
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<td>(Calcium Carbonate)</td>
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<td>Vitamin A Acetate</td>
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<td>Vitamin B₂ (Pyridoxine HCl)</td>
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<td>Vitamin B₁₂ (Crystalline on Resin)</td>
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*U.S.R.D.A.: U.S. recommended daily allowance for adults and children 4 or more years of age.

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about the pre-season screening exams that were to take place the next day.

Senior athletic training students conduct the emergency care workshop. A student is assigned to one of the six topics just mentioned and is then responsible, with staff guidance, for both developing a five-minute presentation and conducting a fifteen-minute session of “situation” practice related to designated assignment. The senior student athletic trainers conduct their presentations, or stations, simultaneously while the remainder of the athletic training students, divided into six teams, rotate through these 20 minute activities. To ensure adequate participation in the stations, it is important to have sufficient resources (e.g., crutches, splints) available. Other athletic training programs should adjust the number of stations according to their enrollments.

To add some fun competition to the in-service, a quiz is taken immediately after all the stations have been completed. Questions on this quiz are prepared in advance by station leaders. The highest-scoring team and individual are recognized with small prizes purchased in advance (e.g., mugs, scissors, pizza coupons).

At the rapid rate our student athletic trainers are learning, it is almost impossible for them to develop or retain a high degree of proficiency in all of the many knowledge areas and skills to which they are exposed. In fact, it is difficult for even the most experienced athletic trainer to maintain a high level of skill in an area in which exposure is limited — for instance, emergency procedures. It is essential that an effective emergency team be well trained. In addition, to develop an esprit de corps among a group of student athletic trainers who spend so much time together, an orientation and in-service which organizes and informs is both productive and meaningful.

Reference


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