What is an Athletic Trainer?

A Valuable Team Member for Pediatricians

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Athletic trainers (ATs) are healthcare professionals who render service or treatment, under the direction of, or in collaboration with, a physician, in accordance with their education and training and the states’ statutes, rules and regulations. The AT skillset encompasses a variety of patient care services including injury and illness prevention, wellness promotion and education, emergent care, examination and clinical diagnosis, therapeutic intervention, and rehabilitation of injuries and medical conditions.

The education and training required to become an AT includes graduation with a bachelor’s or master’s degree from an accredited professional athletic training education program recognized by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE). Using a medical based education model, students complete extensive clinical learning requirements and follow competency-based training in both the classroom and clinical environment. Coursework and formal instruction in the following is required by the CAATE:

- Clinical Examination and Diagnosis
- Acute Care of Injury and Illness
- Therapeutic Rehabilitation and Interventions
- Psychosocial Strategies and Referral
- Healthcare Administration
- Evidence-based Practice

Athletic trainers must pass a national examination to become certified by the Board of Certification (BOC) as well as obtain licensure in the State of Ohio to be eligible to practice athletic training. To maintain certification (BOC) and Ohio licensure, ATs must complete ongoing continuing education requirements.

ATs are recognized by the American Medical Association (AMA) as healthcare professionals, and the AMA has further recommended athletic trainers in every high school to keep America’s youth safe and healthy. In 2003, the American Academy of Pediatrics reinforced this concept, endorsing an inter-association consensus statement which identified an athletic health care team, centered on ATs, as essential to appropriate medical care for secondary school aged athletes.

Finally, the patient-centered medical home promotes teamwork – comprehensive coordination and collaboration with community-based partners – to deliver care that is timely and responsive to patient needs. ATs, similar to school nurses, provide prompt care to children and adolescents in the school setting, decreasing time away from the classroom, thereby promoting academic advancement along with safe physical activity. When pediatricians and other PCPs collaborate with ATs working in secondary schools on patient care, it enables better continuity and enhanced outcomes for patients.