

## Collaborative Care

### *The Value of the Athletic Trainer and Physician Relationship Part I*

By Scott Mullett, M.A., AT, CEFE

#### Overview:

Athletic trainers are an essential component of risk reductions for athletic programs, military personnel, industrial workers, the performance industry, and public safety. Programs across the country place a high priority on the health and well-being of individuals by employing, or working with an athletic trainer.

The cost benefit ratio reported across several different settings reports that the value of AT services stretches far and wide from many different angles including: reducing lost work-time, unnecessary visits to the ER, hundreds of thousands of dollars saved annually on medical costs, and increasing health care efficiency. One such setting that is producing overwhelmingly positive metrics is the physician practice setting.

#### The Data

The metrics have much to say regarding what athletic trainers are, and will continue to achieve in the physician practice setting:

- By utilizing an ATC as a PE, the sports medicine practice analyzed in the study added 3 to 4 patients per clinic day and increased collections by \$200 to \$1200 per day.<sup>1</sup>
- Researchers saw an 18% average increase in productivity when physicians used athletic trainers.<sup>2</sup>
- Orthopedists see 15–30% which translates to an average additional throughput of 10 patients when athletic trainers staff a full-day physician clinic.<sup>3</sup> Physicians reported that residency-trained AT-PEs were “very well” prepared for integration into their clinical operations and that their clinical musculoskeletal skills were “very good” compared to those of physician assistants and nurse practitioners.<sup>4</sup>

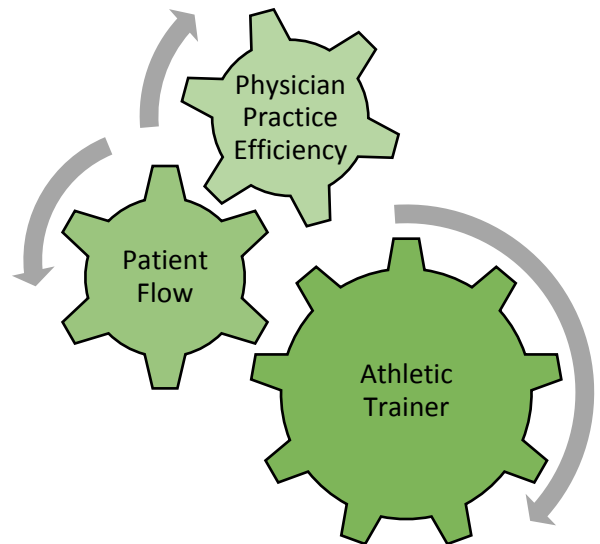


Figure 1-1

When analyzing the data, a strong correlation is present with the athletic trainer improving patient flow and physician practice efficiency (figure 1-1). With this, an inherent value exists regarding athletic training services.

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#### A Brief History:



Orthopedic medicine has a long and rich history, which essentially developed from experiences during wartime. Early written accounts depict the first orthopedic surgeons tending to injuries on the battlefields of Medieval Europe. Splints made from dried horse's blood were crafted to set bone.<sup>5</sup> As the practice evolved, the focus was correcting musculoskeletal deformities in children.

Modern orthopedics expanded after the first World War where the implementation of orthopedic military hospitals paved the way for improving treatment and adding efficiency to the practice. Around this time, sports medicine was beginning to organize. In 1911, the first sports medicine establishment took shape in Dresden, Germany and other investigations and innovations developed later in the decade. The primary idea was to provide medical care specifically to Olympic athletes.

Early accounts of athletic trainers and physicians collaborating is not clearly recorded, but by the 1950's with the establishment of the NATA, and in 1954 with the emergence of the American College of Sports Medicine, one could say the timing was more than just a coincidence. From there, the world of present day sports medicine exploded. With institutions, fellowships, and professional organizations to provide further growth and development within this profession.

#### Perspective:

The face of sports medicine is without a doubt the orthopedic physician. From world-renown facilities like the Andrews Sports Medicine and Orthopedic Center, to the high emphasis placed on athletes receiving the best care after an injury,

Athletic trainers have seen and experienced much while collaborating with orthopedic physicians. From an athletic trainer's perspective, what makes this partnership so effective? What value can athletic trainers obtain from collaboration with orthopedic physicians?

To best answer these questions, a perspective from the business side of athletic training is necessary. Lori Oda, MS, AT is the manager of Dayton Sports Medicine Institute (DSMI). She oversees 17 athletic trainers who provide services to secondary schools, public safety, and YMCA's. She has extensive experience collaborating with the orthopedic physicians who oversee DSMI's program. When looking at the partnership between athletic trainers and physicians, the effectiveness is found in the versatility of the profession:

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*“Athletic trainers have diverse scope of practice and vast skill set. Not only can an athletic trainer effectively manage the workload, but increase patient’s seen without adding stress to the practice. This is observed through the efficiency athletic trainers have developing effective Home Exercise Programs, bracing, prepping the patient, and documentation.”*

*The education and guidance an athletic trainer provides is another means to make this an effective partnership. An athletic trainer is able to assist in guiding patients to achieve their goals before and after surgery. Athletic trainers are great at following up and reporting to the physician how the patient is recovering.*

Building off that aspect, the value athletic trainer receives from working directly with a physician is priceless. Through her experience, Lori discussed:

*When I worked directly with a physician, the one-on-one education I received was priceless. I had the opportunity to read more X-rays and MRI’s, I understood more about medication, and learned how to apply and remove casts. With this opportunity, my skill set increased and added more value to my practice.*

### Collaboration and Beyond:

This is only the beginning! Henry Ford once said, *“If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.”* This is much bigger than athletic training or orthopedic medicine. With the right combination, this collaboration can improve health care. If we work together educating, developing relationships, and adding value to this practice, then the need continues to grow creating more opportunities for athletic trainers.

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### Article Contributor

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**Lori Oda** is the manager of Dayton Sports Medicine Institute-Kettering Health Network and Wayne HealthSports- Wayne Health Care. Lori received her bachelor's and master's degree from Long Island University, Brooklyn. Lori has worked in the secondary school setting, clinical setting and occupational sector. Lori has worked to expand the athletic training into a variety of settings. Lori's goal is to create opportunities for athletic trainers that are currently seen as untraditional and turn them into traditional settings.

### About the Author

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**Scott Mullett** is the founder and owner of AT Efficiency. Scott received both his bachelor's and master's degree from Kent State University. Scott has worked in the secondary school setting, and currently holds a position within the industrial/occupational sector. Scott's goal is to advocate the value of the athletic trainer in all settings.

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## References

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