

Patient Care Documentation: The Value

According to study published in The Journal of Athletic Training in 2017, the top 3 reasons why athletic trainers document include: enhancing communication, monitoring patient progress, and ensuring legal protection¹. With that, the importance of quality documentation stretches far and wide. For the athletic training profession to demonstrate the value and effectiveness of our services, we must document and document well. Listed below are data points which may assist in demonstrating the value of athletic training services through daily documentation.

1. **Tracking** - Enough cannot be said about the importance of daily tracking logs. Daily tracking provides a wealth of knowledge. This includes patient flow, number of encounters, treatments, and injuries. This also helps stakeholders identify an overall schematic of the work that you're performing (more information will be presented next month).
2. **Costs** - There are a few different ways to approach this. First, from a cost-savings perspective, the utilization of CPT coding comparison best fits the emerging settings or organizations who directly hire an athletic trainer (for more information, read: [Show Me the Value!](#)). Secondly, from a hospital outreach, where referral revenue is taken into consideration to measure downstream revenue. Both methods are debated and have their pros and cons (AT Efficiency will tackle this subject later this year).
3. **Patient Progress and Updates** – Nothing is more rewarding than when you can objectively see the results of your fine work! Patient progress and updates are immensely important and measures the quality component of AT value. Daily patient progress identifies key areas of care within an AT's practice, this includes:
 - **Clinical Efficiency** – This can be demonstrated through daily note and progress information. Referring to a treatment regimen from a past case can assist with determining the treatment parameters for a current case. With that, it's important to document how the patient reacted to that treatment sessions, driving that quality improvement factor.
 - **Quality Improvements** – Quality of services provides is a huge component of AT value. The issue lies in objectifying the quality of care. Surveys can be developed and administered throughout the case, but personal discussion with the patient regarding that specific session is essential.
 - **Feedback** – Patient feedback is an essential part of any medical organization. To improve our position, we must acquire feedback from our patients. For a simple patient reported outcome measure to utilize see: [Global Rate of Change](#).

¹ Nottingham, S. L., Lam, K. C., Kasamatsu, T. M., Eppelheimer, B. L., & Welch Bacon, C. E. (2017). Athletic Trainers' Reasons for and Mechanics of Documenting Patient Care: A Report From the Athletic Training Practice-Based Research Network. *Journal of Athletic Training*, 52(7), 656–666