

CHAPTER 4

Professional Preparation

"Success always comes when preparation meets opportunity."

—Henry Hartman

CHAPTER OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

PROFESSIONALS AND PROFESSIONALISM

- Expectations of Professionals
- Characteristics of Professions
- The ABCs of Professionalism
- Fundamentals of Professional Behaviors

CREDENTIALING ATHLETIC TRAINERS

- Licensure
- Certification

Registration

Listing Your Credentials

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Continuing Education

DISSEMINATING YOUR PROFESSION'S KNOWLEDGE

- Planning a Seminar or Community Event
- Nonresearch Articles

CHAPTER SUMMARY

KEY TERMS

Altruism
Affective skill
Accountability
Certification
Continuing Education (CE)
Credentials

Education
Egoism
Integrity
Licensure
Profession
Professional

Professional duty
Professionalism
Registration
Socialization
Training

► Introduction

The profession of athletic training has experienced tremendous numerical growth and continues to gain a reputation as a rigorous and needed profession. Before 1950, “trainers,” as they were commonly known, handed out water, managed the team, and massaged athletes’ sore muscles. Today, athletic trainers are respected allied healthcare professionals, with specialized body of knowledge and clinical expertise. Athletic training’s growth has occurred, in part, because of professionalization and because our profession’s leaders insist on professionalism from all athletic trainers. Ensuring athletic training’s continued growth and respect is dependent on athletic trainers who understand and can conceptualize the importance of professional preparation. Truly, professional behavior and a strong sense of professionalism are leadership behaviors that will continue to foster the growth of athletic training.

Regardless of how it is perceived, professionalism is extremely important; without it, growth is not possible. As athletic training, along with the entire medical and healthcare industries, move into a new era of **accountability** and recognition; it is critical to be vigilant and proactive. A major contributor to being successfully proactive within athletic training is the intentional demonstration of professionalism and related professional behaviors.

In this chapter, we will outline the professional preparation of the athletic trainer. First, we will address the concept of professional behavior and describe what it means to be a professional. Next, we will elaborate on the credentialing process for athletic trainers, including how to maintain credentials. The discussion of credentials will be followed by professional responsibilities, such as social and community sustainability, offering specific strategies for planning a workshop or community event.

► Professionals and Professionalism

Gaining recognition as an allied healthcare profession was a milestone in athletic training’s development. This milestone was a major catalyst for change within athletic training. Maintaining recognition as an allied healthcare profession continues to provide impetus for innovation and growth in athletic training practice and education. A strong sense of duty and responsibility should accompany the designation as a “profession.” Professionals and those engaged in professional education are obligated to behave professionally. It is precisely this obligation, accompanied by a sense of duty to the profession that is a catalyst for growth and innovation within athletic training.

Expectations of Professionals

All professions, regardless of their industry, have certain expectations placed on them by society. The process of learning what those expectations are is called socialization. Some of these societal expectations vary, depending on the profession. **Socialization** within athletic training is the process of learning to behave in a way that is acceptable within the profession. Typically, the socialization process is initiated when a person enters into a professional education program. However, for the most part, professions are expected to ensure the ethical conduct of their members, credential their members for the purpose of protecting the public (or stakeholders), and contribute some good to society.

When discussing professionalism, it is important to first define a professional and a profession. A **professional** is an individual who has acquired a highly specialized education within a defined body of knowledge and has demonstrated a minimal set of predetermined



FIGURE 4.1 Relationship of a Professional and Their Profession.

competencies within that body of knowledge. A **profession** is an organized body of educated people with specialized knowledge. As implied in the definition, a profession is larger than any individual. A profession (i.e., the group as a whole) is obligated to promote and disseminate their specialized knowledge to other members, other professional associations, and to society. Within athletic training, the athletic trainer is a professional and “athletic training” is the profession (**FIGURE 4.1**).

The expectations of a professional can be further delineated by a comparison between different types of preparation, i.e., education and training. **Education** is the process of equipping an individual to perform undefined functions in unpredictable situations.¹ The intended outcome of education is ultimately to prepare individuals to think critically, appraise different situations, integrate multiple stimuli, and make appropriate decisions for any number of circumstances. On the other hand, **training** prepares individuals on how to do a specific task or job in predictable or defined situations.¹ Training results in technical knowledge and produces a technician. For example, athletic trainers

BOX 4.1 Practice Domains Required in all CAATE-accredited Athletic Training Education Programs

Athletic Training Practice Domains

1. Injury and illness prevention and wellness promotion
2. Examination, assessment, and diagnosis
3. Immediate and emergency care
4. Therapeutic intervention
5. Healthcare administration and professional responsibility

are educated in five broad practice domains (**BOX 4.1**). The extent of this education is then intended to be assimilated by the athletic trainer to make informed clinical decisions.

Professional Expectations for Evidence-based Practice

Part of the professional responsibility of athletic trainers is to demonstrate evidence-based practice. Clinical relevance and professional expectations demand an evidence-based approach to clinical decision making. Even other industries, such as corporate management and organizational development, have started using phrases like “evidence-based management” and “evidence-based leadership.” Using evidence is clearly becoming a recognized standard for quality decision making.

A large part of the professional responsibility for using evidence-based practice is not merely citing a source or listing a reference supporting your idea or decision. Legitimate evidence-based practice for athletic trainers is about being conscientious and professional enough to critically evaluate the available evidence. Citing sources or referencing research

findings is not the same as critically evaluating evidence to determine which evidence is most relevant and applicable. Expectations for evidence-based practice of athletic trainers includes the following:

1. Critically reviewing high-quality, relevant clinical research that is based on a well-designed clinical question
2. Considering the patient's (and patient's family's) expectations and values relative to treatment options and interventions
3. Filtering the best available clinical research and the patient's expectations through the relevant and objective experiences of expert clinicians and your own experience

None of these three is more important than the other and all three are critical components to being professional in the application and demonstration of evidence-based practice.

Characteristics of Professions

There are certain expected characteristics of professionals and professional societies. Reputable professions typically have all or most of the following characteristics²:

1. Specialized body of knowledge and skills
2. Scholars who discover and disseminate that body of knowledge
3. Socialization of student members
4. Licensure/certification (or other credentials)
5. Professional associations
6. Governance by peers
7. Social prestige
8. Service to society
9. Code of ethics
10. Autonomy
11. Equivalence of members
12. Special relationship with clients

In addition to the above attributes, there are certain ideals to which all professions and professionals should aspire. These ideals (i.e., values) form the foundation of ethical

behavior. The values of a professional, regardless of discipline, include: altruism, accountability, professional duty, integrity, and respect.²

1. **Altruism** is the unselfish concern over the needs and values of others. It is the practice of putting others first in spite of self-interests. An example of altruism is how an athletic trainer often places his or her patient's needs and desires above his or her own, such as staying late for treatments, in spite of personal obligations, because the well-being of the athlete is of primary importance. Altruism is the antithesis of egoism. **Egoism** (not to be confused with egotism) is behavior predicated on self-interest and personal gain. An example of egoism is staying late to treat the same athlete for no other reason than to eliminate personal guilt, avoid a confrontation with a coach or administrator, or to have something to hold over the coach or athlete by getting him or her to "owe you one."
2. **Accountability** is also innate within an authentic profession. Accountability involves taking responsibility and the willingness to be accountable for actions in light of commitments and expected outcomes. Athletic trainers are often accountable to their patients, the community, their employer, their peers, other professionals, and their profession. Accountability is closely related to duty.
3. Duty in a professional sense (**professional duty**) is different from duty in a legal sense. In a professional sense duty implies a commitment to serving the profession, collaborating with colleagues, and life-long learning. Athletic trainers often exhibit duty by serving on community committees or work with organizations such as the American Red Cross or Emergency/Disaster Relief Teams. In other words, the athletic trainer feels obligated to offer his or her specialized knowledge to a greater cause and humanitarian-based efforts.

4. **Integrity** is another aspect of professionalism, which includes adhering to personal and professional codes and commitments and remaining truthful at all times.
5. Finally, professionals should be respectful, which is demonstrated by esteeming and honoring patients, their families, and all colleagues. The athletic trainer should give every effort to practice all of the above values and, in doing so, models the epitome of professional behavior.

The ABCs of Professionalism

Relative to a profession, professionalism requires a conceptual understanding. Professionalism is like leadership in that you know it when you see it, but defining it is difficult. Some authors have cited as many as 90 elements of professionalism.³ **Professionalism** in medicine and healthcare has been defined as “those attitudes and behaviors that serve to maintain another’s interest above self-interest,”⁴ and “displaying values, beliefs, and attitudes that put the needs of another above your personal needs.”⁵ Based on these descriptions, professionalism is rooted in attitudes and behaviors that put other’s feelings or needs above self (i.e., altruism). The principle of denying self for the good of the client or society is fundamental to professionalism. Professionalism (or the lack of it) is most likely to be demonstrated in a stressful or unplanned situation. When in the middle of a stressful or unplanned situation, it will help to remember and self-reflect on the ABCs of professionalism: attitudes, behaviors, and character.

Attitude

Attitude is a disposition to act or behave in a certain way. In a trying or stressful situation, ask yourself, “Do I have a good attitude about this?” If the answer is “no” or “not sure,” it is likely that professionalism is lacking. Attitude can either be “bad” or “good.” Good attitude is demonstrated by a predisposition to act

positively or optimistically in any number of different situations. Often, athletic trainers are asked or expected to go above and beyond the call of duty (i.e., late hours, early mornings, multiple errands). These “requests” come without proper recognition or are unwritten expectations. While it is important to not let other people take advantage, deciding in advance to respond positively, no matter what situations arise, is a sign of a good attitude.

Behavior

Behavior is the action or reaction of a person. When considering behavior, it is important to ask, “What is the right thing to do, regardless of what seems to be fair?” From this perspective, it is easier to behave professionally. In a professional context, appropriate behaviors are often purposeful; inappropriate behavior is often a result of a thoughtless reaction. While in an emergency or life-threatening situation, it is important for athletic trainers to “react” with accuracy and precision; these types of reactions are based on years of education and purposeful rehearsing. Similarly, professional behaviors should be intentionally rehearsed to the point at which they become automatic. Thoughtless reactions to other individuals are often detrimental. Ultimately, professionalism is a result of appropriate behaviors, regardless of what appears to be “fair.”

Character

Character is fundamentally based in effective self-reflection. Ensuring character involves asking yourself, “Have my attitudes and behaviors been correct?” Individuals with character regularly reflect on their attitudes and behaviors and then make adjustments, if necessary. Having character does not mean that there will never be any mistakes made or that one must always admit guilt in a conflict or misunderstanding. On the contrary, people with great character can make major mistakes. It is, however, because of character that they



FROM THE FIELD

As an undergraduate, I was both an athlete and an athletic training student (ATS). At certain times, this created a unique predicament for me. It was not always clear to me how to handle these two roles, especially when I was with my teammates. As part of a small accredited athletic training education program, there were times when I was present in the athletic training room when my teammates were being treated. This can lead to a professional, or even ethical, dilemma (i.e., conflict of interest). On one occasion, I was in the athletic training room during open clinic hours and one of my teammates came in for an ultrasound treatment. Another ATS performed the treatment, but I could not resist joking around with my teammate, even though my official capacity at that time was as an ATS. It just so happened (unbeknownst to me) that the school's chief nurse was in a meeting in an adjoining room to the athletic training room. She heard me say something inappropriate to this patient and was mortified by my behavior. First thing the next day, I received a private invitation to meet with her and the head athletic trainer. I did not know why I was summoned and did not make the connection until the scene was replayed for me by the school's nurse. Needless to say, I was disciplined... and I deserved it. I had never considered how my joking might be perceived by other professionals or by other patients. She did not know that the patient was a teammate of mine, but it did not matter. I was a young professional student, with a patient getting treatment and I behaved unprofessionally. I had not yet realized the distinction between my role as an ATS and my other roles. She was understanding and gracious, but it was made clear to me in no uncertain terms, could I allow it to happen again.

admit their mistake and immediately take steps to rectify the outcome and change their behavior. Ultimately, owning up to poor attitudes or improper behavior is a sign of great character and is an important attribute of professionalism and a hallmark of leadership. Ultimately, every professional should routinely engage in critical self-reflection.

Fundamentals of Professional Behaviors

The National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) educational competencies outline specific professional behaviors that are intended to permeate every aspect of an athletic trainer's practice of his or her profession.⁶ These professional behaviors are outlined by NATA in their educational competencies manual. Furthermore, there are six codes of professional responsibility outlined by the Board of Certification, Inc. (BOC). These codes span six content areas, including responsibility to patients, expected competency levels,

professional involvement, conducting research, how to behave toward society, and expectations for business practices. While there are additional behaviors that are implied or expected from society or stakeholders, these behaviors are athletic-training specific and are mandated by the profession of athletic training.

Holistic Professionalism

Being a total professional requires more than expert clinical skills. There are behaviors expected of athletic trainers that go beyond clinical or technical competency. In the past, athletic trainers have referred to these as affective competencies or Foundational Behaviors of Professional Practice. The professional education of athletic trainers most certainly includes mastering clinical skills and didactic content. However, demonstrating clinical skills is not the extent of a professional's expertise or practice. While much of the socialization of an athletic trainer requires learning the clinical and technical skills of athletic training (e.g., clinical proficiencies and psychomotor competencies),

there are also foundational behaviors and attitudes that are intended to permeate every aspect of an athletic trainer's conduct and practice (e.g., affective competencies). Failure to demonstrate affective skills despite mastery of clinical skills disqualifies a person from being considered a professional. An **affective skill** (or what some might refer to as emotional intelligence or bedside manner) is the appropriate demonstration of mood, feeling, or attitude relevant to a patient's condition or that particular professional situation. The holistic professional is not only aware and attuned to developing and mastering his or her clinical skills but is also keen on learning the most appropriate way to emotionally and empathetically respond to and treat patients.

► Credentialing Athletic Trainers

Every new profession must fight for the proper recognition. Fighting for recognition is certainly true for athletic training. Once a profession is recognized, there are different forms of regulation to help validate the profession and protect the public's interest. In athletic training, validation and regulation includes credentialing. **Credentials** are an official statement or recognition, supported by a larger governing body that validates the holder as competent to perform certain tasks or demonstrate knowledge. Having some form of credentials implies that the holder can be trusted.

Professions have a responsibility to the public to credential their professionals. The BOC is the entity that credentials athletic trainers on the national level. In addition to national credentials, many states also credential athletic trainers. This dual credentialing model is very desirable and lends itself to the increased credibility of athletic training. Currently, 49 states and the District of Columbia regulate the practice of athletic training. Individuals must

be legally recognized by the appropriate state regulatory agency prior to practicing athletic training. For a list of states that regulate athletic training, visit the BOC website at www.boccatc.org. There are three forms of credentials used to regulate athletic training: licensure, certification, and registration.

Licensure

Licensure is a credential that is awarded by a state. A state licensing board oversees who is licensed in their state and enforces state regulations on licensees. Of the types of regulation, licensure is typically the most closely regulated and, consequently, the most desirable. The reason for this is that the state is responsible for the public's safety. As the most restrictive, licensure is often the most coveted form of credentialing by a profession. Typically, athletic trainers must be BOC-certified before they are state eligible for licensure. Furthermore, many states often restrict the use of the title "athletic trainer" to those who are licensed. This means that it is possible, based on your individual state's practice act, that someone who has passed the BOC certification exam may not be able to refer to themselves as an "athletic trainer" without the state's permission (i.e., licensure). However, each state has its own set of rules and regulations regarding who can be licensed and how licenses are attained.

State Practice Act

A state practice act is a set of laws and rules delivered and governed by a state that governs the practice of athletic training within their borders. It is an absolutely essential aspect of professional behavior to be familiar with and knowledgeable about the specific state practice act. For example, if you are practicing athletic training in Ohio, you must be familiar with the Practice Act set forth by the State of Ohio. Likewise, if you are practicing in Pennsylvania, Florida, Oregon, Texas, or any other

state, you must also be familiar with those states' athletic training practice act. Each state's practice act is different and has different nuances regarding the scopes of practice and definition of terms used. To assume that every state practice act uses the same definitions or language would be a mistake. You can access your state's practice act via the BOC website (www.bocatc.org).

Certification

Certification is a form of credentialing that is awarded by a national association or organization. Certification is awarded when an individual demonstrates a predetermined level of competency. Standards for demonstrating minimal competency are left to the certifying agencies. However, certifying agencies must also undergo rigorous scrutiny to further protect the public and potential certificate holders. The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) is a federal entity that accredits certifying agencies. The BOC is accredited by the NCCA. Competency is also demonstrated by graduating from an accredited university or college, often with regional and programmatic accreditation. Regional accreditation is for the entire institution. Programmatic accreditation is only for specific programs.

Within athletic training, an individual may not be considered a "professional" until certification is awarded by the BOC. The BOC owns the trademark on the ATC® credential. Therefore, it is the BOC (and not NATA) that administers the national exam and grants the ATC® credential to those who successfully pass the national exam. In general, certification is not as restrictive as licensure; however, most states only grant a license to an individual with BOC certification.

In the case of athletic training, graduating from a athletic training education program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) does not, in and of itself, satisfy standards

to practice as an athletic trainer. However, it is the only avenue that qualifies someone to sit for the BOC exam. Once certified by the BOC, in most states, you are not yet qualified to practice as an athletic trainer; one hurdle remains. That hurdle is the state-level credential (i.e., the license). Only after being credentialed by the state may an individual use the title "athletic trainer" and practice in that state as an athletic trainer. **FIGURE 4.2** is a chain-of-events map that depicts the steps required to practice athletic training. Note that there are exceptions to the rules of this process and specific regulations vary from state to state.

Registration

Registration is the third form of professional credentialing that helps to regulate professions. Like licensure, registration is operated at the state level. Registration offers protection for the profession by not allowing those

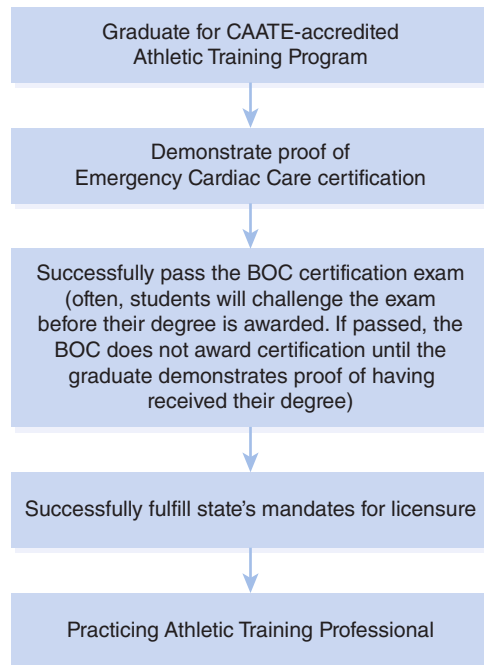


FIGURE 4.2 Chain of Events Map to Athletic Training Practice.

not registered to use the title “athletic trainer.” However, guidelines for registering in a state may be as simple as notifying the state of your presence and demonstrating that you are a practicing member of a profession or a more rigorous process. In any case, athletic training registration requires evidence of BOC certification. The most common form of registration within healthcare belongs to nurses. In fact, nurses are known as “RNs” or Registered Nurses. Within nursing, gaining registration is a rigorous process.

Listing Your Credentials

Once you have earned your credentials, what is the professional way to display them? There is an appropriate way that credentials and designations should be listed by athletic trainers. The general rule of thumb is to list academic degrees first; licenses second; and certifications, fellowships, and other credentials last. For example, a certified athletic trainer who has earned a master’s degree and does not work in a state that has licensure should delineate their credentials as, “Jane Doe, MS, ATC.” It would be inappropriate to list it as “ATC, MS.” However, if the same athletic trainer is working in a state that has licensure, the correct form is “Jane Doe, MS, AT, ATC.” Note: some states may require the use of the letter “L,” as in LAT, to delineate Licensed Athletic Trainer and others may not. If your state uses the “L” or gives you the option to use it or not to use it, the correct way to write your credentials would be “Jane Doe, MS, LAT, ATC.” Of course, there is always the option not to use the credential ATC at all if you work in a state that has licensure, although it is not recommended. The idea is that licensure is a higher level credential compared with certification and, therefore, certification is implied if licensed. In this case, you would simply use, “Jane Doe, MS, AT” or “Jane Doe, MS, LAT.” However, as mentioned previously, this is not recommended because certain states may not require BOC certification

for their licensure. That is all the more reason to be aware of the laws and rules of your state practice act. Finally, if you use more than one credential, for example, two academic degrees, list them in order of difficulty of obtaining them, for example, “Jane Doe, PhD, MAT, AT, ATC.” With credentials of similar difficulty, such as ATC and PT, list them in chronological order.

► Professional Responsibility

The professional responsibility of athletic trainers is less about professional behavior (although professional behavior is a responsibility) and more about what it takes to promote their profession and maintain involvement in their profession. Membership within the athletic training profession is not determined solely by being a member of NATA per se, although that is a part of it. Membership within the profession is based on three fundamental issues:

1. Attaining the appropriate credentials.
2. Maintaining those credentials through continuing education and commitment to life-long learning.
3. Engaging in activities that promote the profession’s knowledge.

Continuing Education

Attaining your credentials requires life-long commitment and sacrifice. Athletic trainers must continually maintain emergency cardiac care certification (e.g., CPR for the Professional Rescuer by American Red Cross or Basic Life Support by American Heart Association) and accumulate and document 50 hours of **Continuing Education (CE)** in every cycle. Of those 50 contact hours, 10 must be from the evidence-based practice (EBP) category. Furthermore, individual

✓ LEADERSHIP APPLICATION

You are the director at a small rehabilitation clinic in a rural part of the state. John is the only staff athletic trainer, carries a huge patient load, and is responsible for providing athletic training services to the local high school. John arrives at work one morning and he is worried and preoccupied. You notice John's behavior and are concerned, so you ask him if anything is the matter? John's reply is that he received a letter from the BOC stating that his CE cycle is coming to end in 8 weeks and he has not yet reported any CE activity. If he does not meet the stated CE requirements, his certification will be revoked. John is worried because he has completed some CE activity but has lost the documentation. He also fears that he will be a few hours short of what is required.

Reflection Questions:

1. As his clinical director, what is the first bit of advice that you would give to John?
2. Where and how can John attain some CE credit hours in the next 8 weeks?
3. What can you do to help John verify the CE activity he claims he has completed?
4. How will you prevent this situation from happening in the future?

states may require additional CE contact hours. For example, Ohio requires every athletic trainer to have 1 contact hour every year in ethics. This is yet another reason why it is imperative to be familiar with your individual state's practice act. Within athletic training, CE contact hours are divided between five categories and has minimum and maximum allowances per CE cycle.

1. EBP category: CEs related to evidence-based practice (minimum 10 CEs)
2. Category A: BOC approved provider programs (maximum 40 CEs).
3. Category B: Professional and scholarly activities (maximum 33 CEs.).
4. Category C: Post-certification university coursework (maximum 40 CEs).
5. Category D: Individualized options (maximum 28 CEs).

After you earn the ATC credential, the BOC will provide detailed information on how to track and record CEs. CE documentation must be kept for the entire reporting period in case there is an audit. In the event of an audit, the ATC being audited must supply proof from the CE-event sponsor of attendance. For example, adequate proof for any event in Category

A is typically a certificate of attendance, letter, or event name badge that includes the attendee's name and license, certification, or member number.

Engaging in professional activities that promote athletic training knowledge is also a professional responsibility. Examples of this include research, scholarly presentations and writing, and community education. Usually, research and scholarship are done by graduate students or the profession's scholars; community education is the responsibility of all athletic trainers. Other ways to promote athletic training include celebrating National Athletic Training Month (annually recognized in March), writing articles for local newspapers or other publications, or hosting community educational workshops or sponsoring a booth at local health fairs. Another important way that practicing professionals can promote athletic training knowledge is by educating parents, coaches, patients, and other community members on the role and education of athletic trainers as well as disseminating the profession's knowledge, such as common injury recognition and prevention techniques or ensuring that the NATA's position statements are being followed. **BOX 4.2** is a list of the NATA position, official, and consensus statements.

BOX 4.2 List of the NATA Position, Official, and Consensus Statements

Position Statements (date released or updated, if applicable)

1. Management of Acute Skin Trauma (December 2016)
2. Preventing and Managing Sport-related Dental and Oral Injuries (October 2016)
3. Exertional Heat Illnesses (September 2015)
4. Management of Sports Concussion (March 2014)
5. Preparticipation of Physical Examinations and Disqualifying Conditions (February 2014)
6. Conservative Management and Prevention of Ankle Sprains in Athletes
7. Lightning Safety for Athletics and Recreation (March 2013)
8. Evaluation of Dietary Supplements for Performance Nutrition (February 2013)
9. Anabolic-Androgenic Steroids (September 2012)
10. Preventing Sudden Death in Sports (February 2012)
11. Heat Illness Treatment Authorization Form
12. Consensus Statements for Heat Illness Guidelines
13. National Athletic Trainers' Association Position Statement: Safe Weight Loss and Maintenance Practices in sport and Exercise (June 2011)
14. Prevention of Pediatric Overuse Injuries (April 2011)
15. Preventing, Detecting, and Managing Disordered Eating in Athletes (February 2008)
16. Management of the Athlete with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus (December 2007)
17. Management of sports-related concussions (September 2004)
18. Management of asthma in athletes (September 2005)
19. Head-down contact and spearing in tackle football (March 2004)
20. Fluid replacement for athletes (June 2000)
21. Exertional heat illnesses (September 2002)
22. Emergency planning in athletics (March 2002)
23. Environmental Cold Injuries (November 2008)
24. Acute management of the cervical spine-injured athlete (May 2009)
25. Skin Diseases (July 2010)

► Disseminating Your Profession's Knowledge

Disseminating knowledge is an expected behavior of a professional. Disseminating knowledge is much broader than presenting research at academic conferences or publishing research in a peer-reviewed journal. The good news is that you do not have to be a professional scholar or researcher to disseminate your profession's knowledge. Disseminating knowledge can take on many forms, including articles in a local newspaper, clinical outcomes studies, workshops for coaches and parents, handouts

and fliers for patients and athletes, and informal talks or guest editorials at a local community center or local newspaper. One of the easiest and most common ways for athletic trainers to disseminate their profession's knowledge is by planning or participating in an educational seminar or community event.

Planning a Seminar or Community Event

Part of the athletic trainer's responsibility is to serve as a liaison to their local community. One way to promote athletic training and foster professional relationships is to organize and administrate educational events.

This may take on several forms, from a small local seminar to a larger regional conference. Obviously, planning a regional conference is more involved. Conferences typically serve the needs of a diverse group of professionals, attract people from different geographic locations, and have multiple educational tracks. On the other hand, seminars or symposia are usually topic focused, serve the needs of a specific group, and/or have a narrow geographic draw. The planning process involves the following phases and steps and some may require advanced planning of up to 18 months.

1. *Needs analysis*: Determine what group(s) the conference or seminar will target. This may consist of identifying the educational needs or interests of a specific audience or audiences (i.e., coaches, athletes, physicians, athletic trainers, etc). For smaller seminars, another approach is to identify an area of interest or expertise to which you (or others) are able to present.
2. *Develop a planning committee*: Once the target audience is identified and their needs are identified, create a team (or teams) that can organize the event. Separate from the organizing (or Steering Committee), there needs to be subcommittees created to manage different aspects of the conference. Following are examples of subcommittee::
 - a. *Finance Committee*: To manage the conference budget, including all revenue and expenses.
 - b. *Venue Committee*: To manage the conference location (i.e., parking, traffic flow, exhibits, room capacity, access to local restaurants, local attractions). Several of these aspects may require their own subcommittee (for example, exhibits).
 - c. *Educational Committee*: To manage educational tracks, speaker's invitations, speaker's schedules, technology for presentations, and CEs for participants.

- d. *Registration Committee*: To manage all registrations, travel, and accommodations.

Obviously, these committees need to work closely. Some committees will have to stay in closer contact than others. These subcommittees may also create a special needs task force (for example, one for technology). Obviously, the overall planning committee needs to stay abreast of committee actions and needs. Do not underestimate the value of having a team member or consultant who is experienced at planning and organizing seminars and conferences.

3. *Develop a timeline for implementation*: Finally, it is critical to have a realistic timeline to convene a conference. It may take as much as 18 months to plan and organize a large conference. A small seminar may only require a few months of planning.

It is important, when planning seminars, to consider your target audience and the type and number of CEs you are going to offer. Be sure that during the planning process your committees have applied for BOC approval to offer CEs from Category A. If seeking CEs for the EBP category, extra time and planning may be required. Consider the time of year, holidays, vacations, cost of travel, venue, and attractions. All of these factors influence desirability of the event. **FIGURE 4.3** is a sample timeline for planning a large educational event. A well-planned, organized event goes a long way to shining a positive light on the profession and is an excellent demonstration of professional leadership.

Nonresearch Articles

Not every athletic trainer needs to be a scholar who generates new theories or discovers new methods for clinical practice or educating future professionals. In fact, most athletic trainers need to practice the scholarship of engagement, which is applying and refining



FIGURE 4.3 Educational Event Time Line.

their clinical skills for expert patient care. Additionally, taking the time to write an editorial for the local newspaper or a flyer or brochure that can be disseminated to local area parents, athletes, at-risk populations, coaches, or community clubs (e.g., cycling or running clubs) is a great way to demonstrate professionalism and disseminate your profession's body of knowledge.

LEADERSHIP ACTIVITY

The next time you are surfing or browsing the World Wide Web, log onto the BOC website (at www.boccatc.org), familiarize yourself with the site, and search for the information listed below. Be prepared to bring the information you find to class and discuss it with classmates and faculty.

1. The BOC Candidate Handbook.
2. BOC policies regarding acquiring and maintaining approved provider status.
3. A list of 10 BOC-approved CE providers.
4. A list of 10 upcoming CE events.
5. Find the link on the BOC website to your specific state regulatory agency and, if applicable, print your state's athletic training practice act.

Chapter Summary

Professional students and young professionals need to be aware of where their profession came from and have a grasp of the obstacles that were overcome to gain professional status. Furthermore, professionals must maintain and adhere to a standard of excellence and engage in critical self-reflection to ensure that professional attitudes, behaviors, and character are maintained. Understanding the credentialing process, including the differences between licensure, certification, and registration within athletic training, is important. Athletic trainers need to understand that practicing professional behavior strengthens the athletic training credential, promotes the profession, and demonstrates leadership. Finally, taking professional responsibilities seriously by promoting and disseminating athletic training's unique knowledge is critical. This can be accomplished by partaking in CE and offering or hosting educational opportunities for other members or for the community.

Wrap-Up

Key Terms and Definitions

Altruism Treating others unselfishly, with concern for the needs and values of others.

Affective skill The appropriate selection of mood, feeling, or attitude relevant to a patient's condition or professional situation (a.k.a. emotional intelligence or bedside manner).

Accountability Accountability involves taking responsibility and the willingness to give an account for actions in light of commitments and expected outcomes.

Certification A form of credential that is awarded by a national association or organization.

Continuing Education (CE) Education and or training activities earned by a certified or licensed professional that are acquired post-credential in order to maintain that credential.

Credentials Official statement or recognition of a governing body that an individual has demonstrated pre-established competency in an area.

Education The process of equipping an individual to perform undefined functions in unpredictable situations.

Egoism Behaviors based solely on self-interest and personal gain.

Integrity Adhering to personal and professional codes and commitments and remaining truthful at all times.

Licensure A form of credential that is awarded by a state or federal agency. Licensure is often more restrictive than certification.

Profession An organized body of educated people who have specialized knowledge.

Professional An individual who has acquired a highly specialized education within a defined body of knowledge.

Professional duty A commitment to serving the welfare of the profession, collaborating with colleagues, and committing to life-long learning.

Professionalism A conviction toward displaying values, beliefs, and attitudes that put the needs of another above your personal needs.

Registration A form of state credential that protects the public by requiring professionals to notify the state of their intent to practice.

Socialization A continuing process whereby a person acquires a personal identity and learns the norms, values, behavior, and skills appropriate to his or her position.

Training The process of preparing individuals to perform a specific task within a defined or predictable situation.

References

1. Johnson M. Definitions and models in curriculum theory. *Educational Theory*. 1967;17(2):127–140.
2. Hammer DP. Professional Attitudes and Behaviors: The “A’s and B’s” of Professionalism. *Am J Pharm Educ*. 2000;64:455–464.
3. Craig D. Learning professionalism in athletic training education. *Athletic Training Education Journal*. 2006;1(1):8–11.
4. American Board of Internal Medicine, *Project Professionalism*, ABIM Committee on Evaluation of Clinical Competence, Philadelphia PA:1995.
5. Beardsley RS. Chair report of the APhA-ASP/AACP-COD Task Force on Professionalization: Enhancing professionalism in pharmacy education and practice. *Am J Pharm Educ*. 1996;60:26S–28S.
6. National Athletic Trainers’ Association. *Athletic training educational competencies*. NATA; Dallas, TX: 2006.