

Pinky Newell Address EATA January 8, 2005

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Thank you to Charlie Thompson for nominating me to give this address and my respect and regard to the individuals on the dais.

The most important person in my life that I owe my learned compassion and diligence from is also here tonight – my best friend and soul mate Mare.

I wish to thank the EATA for the honor of presenting to you this evening knowing the background of Pinky Newell, the EATA, and those that have spoken before me. It is indeed a humbling experience and an honor to provide this address.

I want to speak about an educational issue that will affect all of us in the future. But in order to adequately do this I must also revisit the past for a few moments.

When I was looking for a school to attend for athletic training in 1970, there were four athletic training curriculums in the country at that time. Lamar University in Texas, and Mankato State in Minnesota were two of the four curriculums approved by the NATA. Fortunately, for a guy from the farming metropolis of Hamlet, Indiana with a senior class of 62 in a consolidated high school, where there were no stop lights; there were two curriculums within the state in Purdue and Indiana State. I had the opportunity to interview with Pinky at Purdue and then with Mel Blickenstaff at Indiana State.

It was a good choice to go to Indiana State as “Blick” was friends with Pinky and I was able to obtain input from two future NATA Hall of Fame members. While Pinky was the NATA Executive Secretary Blick became involved with the NATA educational and certification processes. I learned throughout my academic time the importance of professional involvement.

In 1982 there were 62 curriculums. In 1990 a major or major equivalent is required for all 73 accredited curriculums through a mandate from the NATA board of directors in 1980. In 1990 the JRC-AT is formed as an independent accrediting body within the CAHEA and now CAAHEP system. As recently as 1998 there were 82 curriculums of which 68 had been previously NATA Approved curriculums.

Today in 2005 there are 297 with the potential for approximately 350 by this time next year in 2006. What does this growth mean and where are and should we be going and what should we be striving for?

First, a little audience participation and not without some risk on my part.

Would all of those who graduated in 1995 or earlier with a degree in athletic training from an undergraduate or graduate CAHEA or CAAHEP accredited program that was independent of any other major please stand.

I see a couple to my left - Thank you

Would all of those who graduated after 1995 with a degree in athletic training from an undergraduate or graduate CAAHEP accredited program that was independent of any other major or those currently enrolled in such a program please stand.

A significant increase in number - Thank you

As you have seen, there is a trend for improving our educational system based upon the increase of those of you receiving a degree in athletic training. As you also have witnessed in the assembled group, we have a long way to go relative to those that did not stand.

So what is all the fuss about athletic training education and how or why do we learn? For some of the examples provided I am sure you can relate them to individuals you know.

When we come into this world we are immediately met by a person or persons that become our caregivers and providers by default - like it or not. They taught us how to have our needs taken care of as we complained with tears and screams when we needed to be attended to. We do not know or remember this but we know it was done.

For many of us we were thrust into this role as we became new parents and found out that there was no instruction manual or video that could ever have prepared us for the task at hand.

Some individuals continued their crying and whining process throughout their lives as a way of constantly having their needs met. It always amazes me how these are the individuals, or in education the institutions, that are also the last to see what is the best for the whole population or the profession. These individuals or institutions continually look to having only their needs met without having the foresight to dream and create the future.

As we grew into early childhood we learned the meaning of no and don't touch sometimes with resulting physical pain such as touching a hot surface as the pay back for not listening.

Sesame Street, Fred Rogers, or Captain Kangaroo reinforced ways of how to share with others, learning that we are not unique in the world, and how to respond to those who express kindness to us with gifts, words, or actions.

This is an area that seems to be ingrained, comprehended, and practiced by many and also totally lost on others.

Once out of this time frame we moved on to kindergarten and elementary school where we hopefully continued to learn the rules of life and that there are many different types of people and personalities that we must live among and get along with. We began to choose the friends that will guide us whether that was good, bad, or indifferent.

Why is it that we always had more fun and excitement with the bad ones?

In high school we learned that life was not always fair, parents didn't know everything, rules were made to be stretched and broken and there were consequences, both good and bad, for our actions. We hurt feelings of others and were admonished in ways we never thought possible as a result. We lost friends to death due to either their risk taking or circumstances that were out of their control and this has impacted our lives forever. Then, we were off to our choice of higher education either with a clear goal in sight or a willingness to try a different educational opportunity.

Once we decided on our profession we explained to our families what athletic training is and what athletic trainers do, then we jumped in with both feet. Depending on when you did or did not stand up a few minutes ago, we were all going in very similar yet different directions.

Some of us had mutual tasks of learning about physical education, health, kinesiology, or another allied health field along with athletic training while a few of you were able to concentrate solely on your chosen discipline and profession.

Personally, I envy those who were able to do this. As an undergraduate I had a major, a minor, and two specializations. Ironically, athletic training was one of the specializations.

What we all did have in common was a mentor or mentors that guided and nurtured us sometimes in ways we did not understand many times until years after graduation to be the best professional that we could be.

We learned to deal with many personalities and individuals of varied ethnic and sociocultural backgrounds and strove to treat all equally.

As Dave Perrin spoke about two years ago this is an area that continually needs to be emphasized and developed. Tolerance and acceptance is not the issue rather it is human compassion and understanding that is required.

Being a son of a Lutheran minister I also had this instilled as a personal virtue from the examples of my parents as my early years of growing up in Gary, Indiana. This was in a very diverse society.

While I am fortunate to have been inducted into the NATA and NYSATA Hall of Fames, one of the accolades I am most proud of is that of our campus wide faculty Martin Luther King Jr. award for being an advocate for the minority students on our campus. I thank my parents for teaching me the value of all human beings and I strive to instill this in our students.

So where is this talk and the profession going and need to go?

The first and foremost educational issue is that of requiring a degree in athletic training that will be recognized throughout the country. To have a degree that is as recognizable as English or Chemistry would assist in name recognition of the profession as well as impacting several other areas that will follow.

What are some of the pros and cons of a degree?

Certainly you would have the name recognition as a pro as was previously mentioned. The con of this aspect is that all practitioners will become more accountable for their actions clinically and professionally as the name recognition of athletic training and the understanding and expectations of the profession spread.

The current number of curriculums has increased significantly the number of faculty ATC's and has created multiple new academic employment positions. In addition, practicing clinicians involved with the curriculums are being rewarded much more regularly with compensation and academic recognition.

With this employment increase, the need for tenure track faculty to promote research and publications has added much material to the knowledge base of the profession. A significant portion of this research is providing valuable evidence based practice considerations that should improve the overall quality of health care provided to our patients regardless of employment setting. This should make us all better clinicians.

A con of this will be for those that do not remain abreast of current trends and research findings and fall behind clinically. It may also mean that practicing ATC's will have to evaluate their tried and true treatment and rehabilitative practices for effectiveness. Just as plaster casts have seen their day give way to fiberglass, we may also come to the realization that our ultrasound and PRICE practices, while clinically traditional, do not improve our rehabilitation outcomes.

This too may actually expose some of our own shortcomings professionally in our educational preparation or it may validate our educational practices.

There will be fewer curriculums with the degree requirement but is this bad? Nationally there are currently 157 occupational therapy curriculums, 205 physical therapy programs, and 134

physician assistant programs and as previously stated 297 athletic training programs with potential growth to 350.

Why are we so propagated? Are our programs purely educational or are the students still providing a workforce?

Do students travel without an ATC and why does this happen? When will this become an issue of the profession to emphasize protection of the patient rather than continuing to say it is an educational issue?

There are coaches and assistant coaches for every sport yet institutions will not support adequate medical staff for the welfare of the athletes. What takes place at your institution and what will you do to discontinue and correct it?

It can happen provided we do not continue to endorse the notion that a student can provide the same level of healthcare as a qualified professional.

Ask your student athletes which they would rather have. Ask their parents for a more vehement response.

Athletic training students will be able to continue to learn as their ability to travel with an ATC becomes an educational expense and experience, not an athletic one. Academic programs do need to be held accountable for these opportunities financially and through accountability.

A student may still handle the assumption of responsibilities but they will be under the proper supervision of a credentialed professional.

Does the issue sound familiar? It should as Jeff Ryan emphasized the same area from a public protection aspect in his address last year. This is an issue that must be addressed by the profession and all practicing professionals.

How many more ATC positions would be available if we as a profession and individuals discontinued the practice of students taking the place of qualified staff by the end of this year? Think forward to what could be rather than looking at what it currently is.

The loss of curriculums due to attrition will only serve to strengthen our position in the workplace, not diminish it. Reduced supply improves marketability.

The NATA is a founding organization in the World Federation of Athletic Training and Therapy. While the concept of the federation is applaudable, isn't it ironic that our profession may be more recognizable in many other places in the world than in our own country?

Athletic training is recognized elsewhere due to BOC certification – the gold standard internationally. What is not readily recognizable is the athletic training profession on an academic transcript of an individual applying for a position in one of the other countries in the federation. A major that is hyphenated, optioned, specialized, concentrated, or slashed with another discipline on a transcript says much about our lack of recognition and instructional emphasis in our own nation.

As we look to strive for national mutual recognition from state to state through standardized regulatory act language should not we also be striving to standardize first our educational professional name and academic recognition? Imagine if you would what this could mean to our future graduates.

The initial United States mutual recognition agreement for athletic training would allow for potential participation in the free trade agreement. If we had a degree requirement it could be

recognized as many other service and provider professions are from country to country. Athletic training can become a profession that is recognized universally for its degree that is filled with specific knowledge, skills, and abilities. Whether you would travel to Canada, Australia, or to Saudi Arabia the degree and what it indicates would travel with you.

A degree name implies knowledge in a specific professional domain. By having a degree, graduates are automatically deemed to be an "expert" by its completion. If we are to be leaders and in reality peers in the health care field, we must demonstrate the need for dedication of the education of our students.

The degree and its implied expertise also opens avenues for access to additional health care dollars and improved workplace and financial issues.

I would be remiss if I did not thank several individuals for the enduring support that they have provided to me personally and professionally.

To Chad Starkey from Northeastern University and the NATA Education Council for the many hours of confusion and collaboration,

to Denise Fandel of the BOC for being the voice of reason when things would begin to snowball,

to Jeff Ryan as President of the BOC for his leadership and internal insight,

to Paula Turocy from Duquesne University for agreeing to run for and serve in the JRC-AT chair position and for providing me with the necessary pushes and shoves along the way,

to the JRC-AT members for their dedication and countless hours of volunteer labor and expertise,

to the Canisius College faculty (Mike Dolan is in the audience) and the staff for their support,

my two daughters Kendra and Chelsea for helping me to learn to be a parent even at times when I did not want to,

to Lynn Caruthers of the JRC-AT for helping to teach me about the quality of life and the dignity of death,

and once again to my best friend and companion Mare who daily demonstrates through example how to do the right things and keeps my priorities in alignment with our family goals.

To use the words of my grandfather as he was seeing me off to Indiana State for my education, "Knowledge can not be taken away once it has been instilled however; it is up to you to make the installation."

I call upon the educational system of athletic trainers to do the same and install the degree system that will take the profession into the future before it becomes too late.

Accreditation and certification activities must remain independent of association governance to maintain credibility, validity, and respectability while communication between all organizations must remain open.

Risk has its challenges and rewards, complacency has none. Be proactive as a member of the organization to get the degree requirement implemented and to assure that accreditation and certification activities remain independent from association governance.

Time for audience participation once again - would all those in the audience that believe a degree in athletic training would improve the name recognition of athletic training,

the potential for improved employment opportunities and improved workplace issues,  
and promote the international presence of athletic trainers please stand.

Thank you once again for the honor of addressing you this evening.