A QUANTITATIVE STUDY TO IDENTIFY THE CORE JOURNALS FOR THE PROFESSION OF ATHLETIC TRAINING
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Context: The effort to base practice on evidence places new value on the use of the research literature in the field of athletic training. However, no research has been published identifying the core journal titles of this profession. Objective: To identify the core literature of athletic training and to determine which major databases provide the most thorough intellectual access to this literature. This study is part of a broader project by medical librarians using a common methodology to identify the core journals of the allied health professions, and represents the first report for the profession of athletic training. The fifteen previous studies have all been published. Design: Three representative journals widely read by those in the athletic training field were selected, from which all cited references were collected from the most recent three years. Citation analysis was applied to the resulting list of cited journals in order to reveal the core journal titles in the discipline. Three major databases were scanned to determine extent of coverage for these core journals. Measurements: Frequency of citation from 2002 through 2005. Results: Of the total 8,678 citations, one third was to a compact group of six journals; another third of the citations referenced an additional 42 titles. These forty-eight journals therefore comprise the core titles of the profession. The remaining 2,837 citations were scattered across more than 1,000 additional journal titles. Conclusion: The results show that the research literature of athletic training spans a variety of disciplines. Because the number and scatter of citations over a three year period identify the key journals in athletic training, practitioners will be able to focus their scan of the literature accordingly. Athletic trainers preparing to submit articles for publication may now consider which journals will give them the broadest likelihood of readership and therefore the greatest opportunity to improve practice in the profession. Further, the study results may advise athletic trainers of the most efficient access to their core literature; encourage database producers (e.g. MEDLINE, SPORTDiscus, CINAHL) to increase coverage of core titles that are not included or whose contents are only partially covered; and guide journal and database purchasing decisions for libraries serving athletic training programs. Key words: athletic training, citation analysis, journals, MEDLINE, CINAHL, SPORTDiscus.