ATHLETIC TRAINING STUDENTS’ CLINICAL EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

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Introduction: Athletic training education has seen tremendous growth and development over the past 50 years. With such changes occurring frequently within the curriculums it would not be an unreasonable scenario for the profession to move in one direction while the projected response of the students perception of these changes cause the result to move in another. It is evermore important not to assume what the students’ perceptions will be but to actually measure, document and track perceptual trends that occur within the athletic educational curriculums to support and guide future courses of action.

Objective: Purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of athletic training students’ clinical education experience. Design and Settings: 20-question descriptive survey was developed. Inter-rater reliability, content and construct validity of the survey instrument were established. Surveys were distributed to all junior and seniors at the 2007 Southeastern Athletic Training Association conference and data was collected at this time. Participants were asked perceptual questions pertaining to their 2006 fall clinical experience. IRB approval was obtained. Measurements: Frequencies and percentages were calculated on SPSS 14.0. Subjects: There were 379 participants: 149 males, 238 females. The average age was 21.87 years, 155 (39.9%) were junior students and 233 (60.1%) were seniors. Results: Of the respondents, 90.2% (n=350) planned on attending graduate school and 64.7% (n=251) planned on remaining in the profession for their entire career. 59.3% (n=230) felt their clinical rotations were never over-crowded as opposed to 35.5% (n=137) who felt they sometimes were. 53.9% (n=209) rated the educational value of their clinical experience as good, 35.1% (n=136) excellent, and 9.6% (n=41) either fair or poor. With regards to supervision, 29.4% (n=114) reported being fully supervised 100% of the time, 63.4% (n=246) were mostly supervised, and 6.4% (n=25) were mostly unsupervised and independent. When asked about burnout at the end of the fall semester, 37.9% (n=147) felt burnt out, 31.4% (n=122) did not, and 30.7% (n=119) felt somewhat burnt out. During the semester 53.9% (n=209) felt stressed out while only 17% (n=66) felt no stress at all. 79.1% (n=307) felt their clinical rotations had a positive affect on their academic course work while 19.3% (n=75) felt it did not and 55.2% (n=214) enjoyed and opted having their classes and clinical responsibilities run concurrently while 19.6% (n=76) opted for separate semesters. With course loads, 24.5% (n=95) chose having a 50% reduction in the semesters with clinical requirements. Conclusion: This data reveals some valuable insights from the athletic training students’ perspective regarding their clinical educational experience. Approximately two-thirds of the participants reported not foreseeing themselves remaining within the athletic training profession for their entire career and 63% reported logging clinical hours without continuous supervision despite clear accreditation guidelines which specify otherwise.

Key words: athletic training student, clinical education experience, job satisfaction