Stress and Burnout Experienced by Entry-Level Athletic Training Students


**Context:** Stress and burnout commonly occur within the healthcare profession. Burnout has been associated with elevated levels of depersonalization (DP) and emotional exhaustion (EE) and decreased levels of personal accomplishment (PA). This can have a negative effect on performance and possibly a negative effect on patient outcomes. It is possible that the same stress and burnout can occur in healthcare profession students. While a number of studies have attempted to identify levels of stress and burnout in students, none has focused on the cause of this stress. **Objective:** To determine the levels of stress and burn-out in entry level athletic training students and identify the sources of this stress. **Design:** Cross-sectional anonymous web-based survey design. **Setting:** Self-reported online survey via personal computer with access to the SurveyMonkey® web site. **Participants:** Entry-level undergraduate and graduate athletic training students enrolled in Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) accredited athletic training education programs. **Interventions:** Demographic information was provided and the participants were grouped by sex, level of education, number of clinical rotations completed, average number of clinical hours completed per week and part time employment. **Main Outcomes:** A survey adapted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and the Neuroticism-Extroversion-Openness Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) survey was administered. Participants also completed a survey developed to identify potential sources of stress and the occurrence of adverse symptoms perceived to be associated with stress. **Results:** 1155 students (380 male and 755 female) began the survey and 1000 (84.4%) completed it. Only 5.2% of the respondents were freshman, while 25.8, 28.7, 33.9 and 6.5% were sophomores, juniors, seniors and entry-level graduate students respectively. The majority of the respondents (96.7%) had completed a clinical field experience with 21.5% of them completing more than 25 hours per week. Many of respondents (89.2%) believed that athletic training students have more stress than non-athletic training students. However, although they find their classes and homework to be a source of stress, students do not appear to be suffering from burnout. This is based on the results of the MBI. Students also identified time and money as concerns and sources of stress, but they were enthusiastic about the athletic training profession and committed to completing their programs. The survey also suggested that the clinical field experiences were in general, not a cause of stress, as respondents rated their interactions with athletes and clinical instructors as no tbeing stressful. **Conclusions:** Although individual responses varied, the results suggest that athletic training students do not suffer from professional burnout as seen in healthcare professionals. However, because cases of stress and burnout can occur, faculty should still include strategies for reducing the stress experienced by students in the classroom and clinical settings. **Word Count:** 447.