Positive and Negative Influences Impacting the Professional Commitment of Collegiate Athletic Trainers
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Context: Professional commitment is a construct that centers on an individual’s commitment to their profession and the organization that employs them. In the health care profession it is essential that providers impart quality care at all times. In athletic training, however, the demanding work environment can pose challenges in providing care. The collegiate clinical settings possess unique professional challenges to the athletic trainers (ATs). The numerous obligations may challenge the collegiate AT’s motivation and commitment for a prolonged period of time throughout their career and can also make it difficult for the athletic training professional to stay excited. Lack of motivation and excitement may lead to an inability to offer quality care. There is limited research focusing on professional commitment in the context of athletic training. Objective: To evaluate factors that positively or negatively impact that commitment for ATs employed in the collegiate setting. Design: Structured, online asynchronous interviews. Setting: Full-time ATs working in the collegiate setting (Division I, II, or III) with at least 1 year of experience beyond a graduate assistantship. Patients or Other Participants: Thirty-three BOC certified ATs employed in the collegiate setting (Division I =11, Division II = 9, Division III = 13) volunteered with an average of 10 ± 8 years of clinical experience. Data saturation guided the total number of participants. Data Collection and Analysis: Participants responded to a series of questions by journaling their thoughts and experiences via QuestionPro™. Multiple analyst triangulation and peer review were included as steps to establish data credibility. The data was analyzed borrowing from the principles of general inductive approach. Results: Results were separated into two categories: 1) Positive and 2) Negative Influences impacting professional commitment. The emergent themes defining positive influences of professional commitment were professional responsibility, and co-worker support. Professional responsibility encompassed dedication to the profession, ardor to job responsibilities, dedication to student athletes, and commitment to education. Co-worker support speaks to the participants’ ability to maintain professional commitment when they felt their co-workers were also committed to the profession. Negative influences of professional commitment included life stage, work overload, organization, and resources and facilities. Life stage reflects the influence age and family can play on career planning. The remaining 3 themes reflect the impact job demands, work scheduling, and limited personnel can have on maintaining commitment. Conclusions: Collegiate ATs demonstrate professional commitment, which is driven by their dedication to student athletes and athletic training students as well as their desire to advance the profession. There are however many factors that undermine their professional commitment. Understanding what may positively and negatively impact an AT’s professional commitment is essential in developing retention strategies and highlighting an organization’s influential role in helping ATs maintain their commitment. Count: 450