Impact of Various Collegiate Settings on Athletic Trainers’ Definition of Professional Commitment
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Context: Professional commitment is an individualized concept that combines commitment to a profession and the organization of employment. For athletic trainers (ATs), the demanding work environment and job expectations may impact their characterization of professional commitment. The obligations and expectations imposed on ATs at various collegiate divisional settings may influence how ATs stay committed and excited in the profession. Currently there is no defined definition of professional commitment within the context of athletic training. Objective: To evaluate the impact of collegiate divisional setting on the ATs’ definition of professional commitment. Design: Structured, online asynchronous interviews. Setting: Full-time ATs working in the collegiate setting 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 general inductive analysis. Results: Results were evaluated holistically as well as by Division. The emergent theme among ATs in the Division I setting was providing optimal medical care to their student athletes. Professional commitment was operationalized as advocating for their student athletes, providing the best care possible, and mentoring them as young adults. In the Division II setting, ATs were focused on lifelong learning as a reflection of commitment. This was often accomplished by attending seminars, completing CEUs, and continually adding to their skill set in order to provide the best care for their student athletes. Lastly, Division III focused their definition on being a multifaceted health care provider. It was commonly stated that giving all that you can and going beyond your normal duties was an aspect of professional commitment. Conclusions: The definition of professional commitment is dynamic and highly influenced by the setting of employment. Overall, ATs’ professional commitment is derived from providing optimal quality of care to student-athletes, continuously advancing education within the profession, and being a multifaceted healthcare provider. Through this research it was determined that work setting creates an emphasis on different aspects of professional commitment. It is important to understand what keeps ATs motivated in the profession in order to enhance retention strategies. In the future, creating a work environment that has qualities from each divisional setting may help to make professional commitment of the ATs more well rounded. Word Count: 430