

## 2014 EATA WILLIAM NEWELL MEMORIAL ADDRESS

Thank you, Jack, for introducing me to this esteemed group of athletic trainers. I would also like to extend a huge thank you to Johnson & Johnson's for their annual sponsorship of the William E. Newell Keynote Address. Since the inaugural Keynote Address was given in 1987, there have been many extraordinary members of our profession who preceded me that played a very important role in my career. To President Davis and the executive board of the EATA, I am very humbled and truly honored that you selected me to provide this prestigious address this evening. Tonight we honor a prodigious man whose vision for the profession has made a lasting impression on so many athletic trainers in this room. For those hearing about Mr. Newell for the first time, I hope you will understand why he is honored annually for his endeavors in the profession.

I have been a member of the EATA since 1974. For me, traveling 3-5 hours in the snowy/icy tire tracks of the car in front of me to get to the Catskill Resorts for the annual EATA meeting was a ritual. Filling out a 3x5 card, which was literally kept in a shoebox, was how onsite registration was completed. Because women were emerging in the profession, exhibitors thought it was vital to give female Athletic Trainers (ATs) cookbooks and bracelets as part of their "giveaways", not the taping holsters or baseball caps given to the male ATs. Believe it or not, women actually wore gowns to the EATA banquet!

I started my career as a student at the University of Rhode Island under 1972 Hall of Fame member Richard Cole (whose title on his Hall of Fame picture is "Athletic Therapist") and Jack Cooke, who was the assistant athletic trainer to Mr. Cole. Mr. Cooke not only guided me as a student but also continued to mentor me after I graduated during my first years as a young professional. I should mention that in 1973 women Physical Education majors were not allowed to register for the Introduction to Athletic Training course - it was only offered to male Physical Education majors. Well, that wouldn't do! After my appointment with the Dean and Provost, the course was offered to female physical education majors. Classes were held in Keaney Gymnasium but our lab was held in the small "football field building" (often with no heat, because we couldn't go into the men's locker room to get to the athletic training room). They finally did make an athletic training room for women by converting the graduate student locker room located in the basement of the women's physical education building. However, the graduate locker room was so small they had to cut the legs of the taping table to make it fit on a cement "wall" which was about 1 1/2 feet high around the perimeter of the room. Despite the many challenges, once I took the Athletic Training course I was hooked.

After graduate school, I was hired as the first female athletic trainer and first cross-country, track/field coach at Providence College. How lucky was I to be working down the hall from my dad who was the assistant athletic trainer. After I was hired, the Providence Journal wrote an article about us titled "Father and Daughter Tape 'em Together". To this day, we were the first and only "Father and Daughter" athletic

K. LAQUALE

trainers who worked at the same college. I hope that John Davis and his daughter Lindsey will someday work together. Although my dad and I had separate athletic training rooms with mine being no bigger than a small closet, it didn't stop me from embracing the profession of athletic training.

My first national meeting was in 1975 at the Disneyland Hotel (1000 members were in attendance) in Anaheim, California. Just think, we had over 1200 registered for our EATA meeting that weekend. According to Hall of Fame member, Carl Krein, "Pinky believed young men and women needed someone to look up to, and he asked me to organize a luncheon so the students could meet and spend time with sports medicine physicians and various NATA leaders. Pinky believed such interaction would help students grow into productive members of the profession. His first effort to bring together students and leaders occurred in Anaheim in 1975, and indeed, his goal of inspiring students was realized the first year." I attended the first "student trainer" luncheon and had the immense pleasure of meeting Mr. Newell. Also, present at that luncheon was Kent Falb (then Head Athletic Trainer for the Detroit Lions). Who knew back then that our paths would cross again in 1997 when I was the District One Director during his term as President of the NATA? Kent and I have kept in contact since that first meeting in 1975. Thanks to Mr. Newell, the inaugural luncheon did inspire me and other students in attendance to continue in the profession.

Enough about my start into the profession. Here is another example of Mr. Newell's vision for the profession. Years pass and while I was attending the 35<sup>th</sup> NATA Symposium in Nashville, Tennessee, I heard Mr. Newell close his keynote address with these simple words, "On a day-to-day basis, the changes in our association in the future will come if we exercise the kind of wisdom, prolonged effort, and patience that go with looking ahead to what the profession of the association will be in 10 years or even 35 years from now." I am confident that he would be proud of how far the profession has come.

Yes, over the years the profession has indeed changed, but with these changes I have seen many athletic trainers experience an increased stress level with their position causing some to go onto other professions because of it. Some claimed the position took too much time away from the family, others stated they wanted to start a family. The women in athletic training committee chaired by Margie King hosted many sessions on Life Balancing to help with this issue.

When I was program director at Bridgewater, an underlying theme, which resonated among athletic trainers and students in the clinical setting, was "not enough time" and a "constant feeling of fatigue". During the past fall semester, I interviewed a number of preceptors and athletic training students regarding the same issues and the comments were the same. I wondered why this was so.

I'm sure you would agree some days as an athletic trainer are likely to be fun and positive. For Example, once I had a wrestler walk into the athletic training room

K. LAQUALE

complaining of pain in his right shoulder. After doing the usual preliminary questions, I asked him "How high can you raise arm?" He gingerly raised his arm just below his right ear. Kiddingly, I asked him "How high could you raise it before?" His arm shot straight up over his head! Silly wrestler.

Days are often filled with positive situations. For example, knowing that you played a significant role in helping an athlete back onto the field of play or that because of your actions, an athlete did not have a career ending injury.

Some days are tension filled and stressful. Paperwork has to be completed, coordination of treatments must be given while trying to get set-up for multiple home contests, practice times changed...etc. In other words, a day in the life for an athletic trainer.

Or the unexpected occurs:

On April 15, 2013, a bomb exploded at the Boston Marathon - three people died and at least 264 people were injured. Under the pronounced leadership and quick actions of the sports medicine staff many that were injured were quickly treated and did not become a statistic. The video we saw this evening was a great tribute to the sports medicine staff working at the marathon.

On December 13, 1977, a fire started on the fourth floor of a women's dormitory, Aquinas Hall, at Providence College in Providence, Rhode Island. Within 30 minutes ten young women were dead. Two of the ten student fatalities died from injuries received when they jumped out a window, four died of carbon monoxide poisoning and smoke inhalation, and four died as a direct result of burns. Twelve students and one firefighter were injured. Two of our female athletes lived on the same floor as these students.

While I was the head athletic trainer at RI College, two lives were taken. First, the varsity softball coach had a heart attack and died on the track in front of his softball players. Later that same year, a varsity softball player died in a motorcycle accident.

Fresh from graduate school in my first year as the head women's athletic trainer at Providence and later as head athletic trainer at RI College, how to cope with death in the two examples mentioned was not in the athletic training graduate course curriculum.

Coping mechanisms come into play in all types of situations. Sometimes it isn't a life, but a building, which changes your routine. In 1992 while I was the head athletic trainer at Rhode Island College, no one was in the building at 1 am on a Saturday night in January when it was destroyed by fire within an hour. With no gymnasium, my car became my athletic training room traveling to various sites for practices and competition. (Many thanks to my athletic training students and to the generous athletic training supplies donated by Providence College and Bryant College). On

K. LAQUALE

Monday, Dr. John Kelly, MD and Michele Monaco, D.S.C, ATC will be lecturing on the importance of humor and healing. I would agree 100% for humor has been a part of my teaching and my experiences as a clinical athletic trainer. It certainly can make a stressful day easier. For example, humor helped me as I viewed my charred athletic training room. Fire permeated through the ceiling and bricks were scattered on my desk and file cabinet. I thought, *well, I always wanted a skylight and a rock garden.*

Quite often, we as athletic trainers have the “it’s never too much” mindset. It comes from the belief that no matter what is asked of you to do, it won’t be too much. Athletic trainers need to say NO more often. In most cases, we ignore the very signs of burn-out in ourselves which we should be heeding. The feeling of our lack of control leads to stress which leads to burnout.

According to Dr. David Ballard, executive director for the American Psychological Association, those who are most motivated and dedicated-and whose job is a big part of their identity – are most vulnerable to burnout. He points out that stress is not the problem. We are built to deal with stress but not in a relentlessly “fight or flight” way. “We’re functioning more and more in this state of “fight or flight” rather than our baseline normalcy of calm. It is the ongoing high level of stress that causes burnout and you don’t have the energy to be proactive and fight the good fight anymore.”

Interestingly this burnout has a name in the world of medicine, “Compassion Fatigue”. It is a stress disorder defined as, “a deep physical, emotional and spiritual exhaustion that can result from working day to day in a caregiving environment”. With compassion fatigue, the athletic trainer is “unable to recover from the stress during non-working hours”.

Research has in fact shown that employees who believe they do not have time for the personal life feel drained and distracted while they are at work. Little by little the frustrations mount. You know it is wrong to feel this way and you hope the athletes, students and colleagues *don’t notice.*

In addition, the spillover of negative aspect of work into an employee's personal life can lead to job exhaustion, disruption of relationships with family and friends, loss of enjoyment, and increased stress.

It is my contention that quite often the supervising athletic trainer experiencing this fatigue generally does an excellent job in running the room. However, without realizing it, their tone and demeanor often is interpreted as negative and defensive. This type of personality will, in my opinion, affect students and colleagues. Apprehension and fear may drive them to avoid approaching their preceptor. Some students feel that preceptors are putting them through the same hoops that the preceptor went through as a student in the clinical setting. A student is then afraid of the ramifications if they ask for time off for personal reasons.

By the same token, students must be responsible for their actions. Some of the suggestions from students for students include:

- Timing - don't show up late with a donut and coffee in hand.
- Take initiative, but know your limitations.
- Don't feel that you know everything.
- Emailing or texting a supervisor that they need a personal day rather than a one-on-one conversation is inappropriate behavior.
- Make the most of the clinical experience.

NATA Hall of Fame member Phil Donley stated, "The profession is only as good as the people entering the profession". Thus, students, colleagues and preceptors must be accountable for their actions. Many athletic trainers manage career, success and a positive private life with ease. George Burns said, "Look to the future because that is where you'll spend the rest of your life". In my opinion, it is important that we as athletic trainers take time for ourselves to enjoy the future.

Here are five suggestions that might be helpful:

**1. Be kind to yourself.** As an athletic trainer you are the "go to" person. Dr. Christopher Germer, author of the Mindful Path to Self-Compassion, encourages us to take time for reflection during the day. Think about how you can energize yourself or remain energetic, interested and vital – while doing the work. Learn to take care of yourself so you don't get overwhelmed by both the little and big occurrences that will always be a part of both your personal and professional life. Hippocrates stated "If you are in a bad mood go for a walk... if you are still in a bad mood –walk again!"

Dr. Germer also suggests equanimity or level-headedness. This is where you understand that each athlete you work with may have other issues other than the specific injury. For example, if you have an athlete with lower back pain and the treatment you provide doesn't relieve the issue, doesn't mean that you failed or were ineffective as an athletic trainer. There may be other issues affecting the athlete not just the low back pain.

**2. The human interaction part of athletic training is waning along with the "hands on approach to learning". Bring back the power of touch.** The athletic training student of today quite often is taking hybrid and online courses. This negates the hands on approach to learning. Because of this, the art of touch, which is so important in our profession, is being lost. When palpating an injury site, I would

teach my students to let their fingers be their eyes. The power of touch plays such a large role in healing not only for the athlete but also for the athletic trainer.

In a 2013 study completed by Kutz et al., they looked at two learning theories for the Athletic Training Student (ATS). The first, Multiple Intelligence, stresses what is taught, the content and the product –not teaching. The second learning style stresses how it is taught. Instructors are asked to tailor their teaching techniques to individual students. The outcome? The findings suggest ATS apply learned knowledge best when allowed to practice hands-on skills and work independently in order to build self-confidence.

**3. LET IT GO.** The ability to leave work at work at work is also an important part of combatting burnout. Reorganize your priorities to include self-care. Take time for yourself. Engage in relaxing fun and rejuvenating activities. Nourish your relationships by spending time with family and friends. Strive for work-life effectiveness—not balance. The term work- life balance implies that one dedicates an equal portion of time to work and life. Think of one's career as an integral part of life, rather than a separate and obligatory activity. Above all, accept the compliments and gratitude from your athletes. It is what will keep you coming back.

#### **4. Nutrition**

We are always advising athletes on healthy nutrition. Be sure to apply the same advice to yourself. The biggest mistake athletic trainers make with their diet is skipping meals. That can lead to mood swings, lowered metabolism, weight gain, etc. Just as we tell athletes to pack travel foods for the day, you need to do the same.

**5. Be a good mentor** whether it is to an athlete, colleague or a student. The word mentor originates back to the Greek Poet Homer. In the Odyssey, Odysseus is preparing to go fight the Trojan War. He realized he would be gone for many years and needed someone to coach his son on how to be king. He hires his trusted family friend named Mentor to be his son's tutor. Mentor is wise and sensitive – two important ingredients of world-class mentoring. The best mentors recognize that they are first and foremost facilitators and catalysts in a process of discovery and insight. Kutz et al. in a 2006 study stated "Athletic trainers who educate students in the clinical setting need to realize they may be viewed as a mentor to a young and impressionable future professional."

The EATA is our organization and athletic training is our profession, but we didn't get here alone. Mr. Newell is credited with "changing the profession of athletic training from a craft made up of dynamic characters to an allied health profession that is appreciated by the medical community."

For over 64 years we continue to stand on the shoulders of giants- women and men who had a vision for healthy athletes and were willing to work hard to fulfill that vision. Our founders made an investment in the future for us by creating a

K. LAQUALE

profession to be proud of and benefit from. Will we put in the effort so that the next generation will stand on our shoulders?

In closing, I leave you with one last quote. "If I treat you, I can help you today, if I teach you, I can help you for a lifetime." The quote was on a hand carved sign that hung in my athletic training room at Rhode Island College. It was a gift from a coach who felt it reflected my philosophy as an athletic trainer, which was to educate the athlete first. I hope I was able to "teach you" this evening as I shared my reflections on the profession and the remarkable legacy of William E. Newell.

Thank you.