Future Directions of Evidence-Based Practice in Athletic Training: Perceived Strategies to Enhance the Utilization of EBP

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Context: The shift to a culture of evidence-based practice (EBP) in athletic training is a necessary step in both optimizing patient care as well as advancing athletic trainers as healthcare professionals. While athletic trainers have positive attitudes towards EBP, believe it is necessary for the profession, and have been able to gain knowledge on the fundamental concepts involved in the process, they may be having difficulty incorporating the information within their immediate practice. Exploring perceived strategies for enhanced utilization of EBP will help in determining the best ways to educate athletic trainers. Additionally, it is important to identify approaches to apply EBP knowledge in clinical practice to improve patient care.

Objective: To explore the experiences and theories athletic trainers have toward beneficial strategies to promote successful implementation of EBP within athletic training education and clinical practice.

Design: Consensual qualitative research was used as the primary approach to this inquiry to explore athletic trainers’ experiences and perceptions towards EBP implementation strategies. Stratified purposeful and criterion sampling were utilized to recruit participants for the study. Setting: Individual phone interviews. Patients or Other Participants: Twenty-five athletic trainers (14 females, 11 males; athletic training experience = 16 ± 9.41 years) who were participant in the experimental group of a previous investigation were interviewed. These participants represented athletic training educators (n=13) and clinicians (n=12). Data Collection and Analysis: Each participant was interviewed once via telephone. Once the interviews were transcribed, the data were coded for themes and categories. Final themes and categories were determined via consensus of a four-person research team. Each research team member independently coded a portion of the data and created a preliminary codebook. The research team then met as a group to discuss and finalize a consensus codebook that richly captured the data. To decrease researcher bias, triangulation occurred through member checking, the inclusion of multiple researchers, as well as the inclusions of internal and external auditors. Results: Athletic trainers identified several components they perceived as essential for enhancing the use of EBP within the athletic training profession. The components included the need for more EBP resources, more processed information, focused workshops, and opportunities for peer discussion and mentorship. They also described the importance of repetition and being constantly exposed to the concepts involved in EBP. Finally, participants indicated that athletic trainers need to accept their professional responsibility to foster EBP in their daily practices. Conclusions: The proper shift to a culture of EBP in athletic training is going to take both time and a persistent commitment by athletic trainers to create strategies that will enhance the implementation of EBP across the profession. Future research should focus on continuing to identify effective educational interventions for athletic trainers as well as to determine successful strategies to implement EBP into didactic curricula and clinical practice. Additional focus should be given to which
strategies most effectively produce changes in clinical practice. **Key Words:**
Professional responsibility, mentorship, evidence-based practice, qualitative research

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