



BOARD OF CERTIFICATION
FOR THE ATHLETIC TRAINER

Content Outline for Practice Analysis, 8th Edition

EFFECTIVE:

ATHLETIC TRAINER EXAM – MARCH 2023

RE-CERTIFICATION ACTIVITIES - JANUARY 2024

Domain I: Risk Reduction, Wellness and Health Literacy

DESCRIPTION

Promoting healthy lifestyle behaviors with effective education and communication to enhance wellness and minimize the risk of injury and illness

SUMMARY

The Practice Analysis Task Force reviewed published literature pertaining to the Risk Reduction, Wellness and Health Literacy domain. The summary of this literature follows.

Risk reduction, often synonymous with risk management, is one of the most important domains of the athletic training profession. It can be defined as “activities to prevent, ameliorate, treat, and/or reduce injury-related disability and death.”¹ Reducing risk of injury reduces morbidity and cost, and increases the quality of life. It requires general subject knowledge (e.g., anatomy, exercise physiology, biomechanics, health) and specific workplace knowledge (e.g., sport requirements, equipment fitting, OSHA regulations, environmental considerations). In the risk reduction process risks are identified, interventions or plans are implemented, results are reviewed, and the plan is further revised.⁶⁷

Athletic Trainers are able to identify and understand intrinsic (i.e., patient history, demographics, education level) and extrinsic (i.e., environmental, social, sport specific) factors that are relevant to the client, patient, or population. While some risk factors are static or unchangeable, other factors may be within the patient’s or client’s ability to change, such as diet or exercise. Athletic Trainers use knowledge of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors to reduce risk.

Using evidence-based medicine, metrics, and research is important to all domains of athletic training practice; especially Risk Reduction, Wellness and Health Literacy. Athletic Trainers use epidemiological studies to identify the prevalence of an injury or disease within a population or group, and clinical outcome studies to identify effective and safe interventions that address identified deficiencies. Athletic Trainers must be proficient in using national and local information and data sources in order to better serve their patients and the public. Athletic Trainers also utilize questionnaires, pre-participation exams, and databases to help identify risk factors and identify trends and use research and position/consensus statements to guide development of plans for intervention.

In addition to risk reduction, this domain includes concepts related to wellness promotion and health literacy. While there may be many definitions of wellness, one that is relevant is “a multidimensional state of being describing the existence of positive health in an individual as exemplified by quality of life and a sense of well-being.”² Athletic Trainers are expected to promote a healthy lifestyle and environment to all clientele and patients. A holistic approach includes promotion of physical, social, intellectual, emotional, mental, and spiritual wellness. Additionally, Athletic Trainers must recognize associated risks and morbidity factors in order to provide correct and effective interventions or referral to higher echelon/specialized care.

Health literacy involves the education of and advocacy for patients, with the goal of empowering patients to take an active role in their own health and wellness. Athletic Trainers educate and advise on health and

wellness measures, using their position and knowledge to influence the population in making health-conscious choices and discourage unhealthy behaviors.

Athletic Trainers do not limit the sphere of their influence to an individual, patient, or team; rather, many fill the role of a community advocate involved with promoting public health initiatives. For example, Athletic Trainers have been instrumental in educating the public about the consequences of traumatic brain injury beyond the initial injury; Athletic Trainers have led efforts to prevent this injury and others like it by extending their knowledge to school personnel, patients, parents, and legislators.

TASK	DESCRIPTION
0101	Identify risk factors by administering assessment, pre-participation examination and other screening instruments, and reviewing individual and group history and surveillance data.
0102	Implement plans to aid in risk reduction in accordance with evidence-based practice and applicable guidelines.
0103	Promote health literacy by educating patients and other stakeholders in order to improve their capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information needed to make appropriate health decisions.
0104	Optimize wellness (e.g., social, emotional, spiritual, environmental, occupational, intellectual, physical) for individuals and groups.
0105	Facilitate individual and group safety by monitoring and responding to environmental conditions (e.g., weather, surfaces, and work setting).

Domain II: Assessment, Evaluation and Diagnosis

DESCRIPTION

Implementing systematic, evidence-based assessments and evaluations to formulate valid clinical diagnoses and differential diagnoses to determine a patient's plan of care

SUMMARY

The Practice Analysis Task Force reviewed published literature pertaining to the Assessment, Evaluation and Diagnosis domain. The summary of this literature follows.

In order to establish an appropriate plan of care, Athletic Trainers must first understand the nature of a patient's health condition and a patient's personal goals and preferences according to an evidence-based model of healthcare. In order to determine the nature of a patient's health condition, Athletic Trainers conduct assessments and evaluations using clinical expertise that integrates the best available evidence, clinical experience, and the patient's values. These assessments and evaluations are used to establish a likely diagnosis as well as a differential diagnosis. As part of the assessment, evaluation, and diagnostic process, Athletic Trainers use clinical acumen to obtain a thorough and personalized patient history, appraise confounding data, recognize varied presentations of health conditions, and evaluate and prioritize relevant examination, assessment, and diagnostic techniques.

TASK	DESCRIPTION
0201	Obtain a thorough and individualized history using observation and appropriate interview techniques to identify information relevant to the patient's current condition.
0202	Perform a physical examination using appropriate diagnostic techniques.
0203	Formulate a clinical diagnosis by interpreting the information obtained during the history and physical examination.
0204	Establish a plan of care based on the clinical diagnosis and evidence-based practice.
0205	Educate the patient and stakeholders on the clinical diagnosis, prognosis, and plan of care.

Domain III: Critical Incident Management

DESCRIPTION

Integrating best practices in immediate and emergency care for optimal outcomes

SUMMARY

The Practice Analysis Task Force reviewed published literature pertaining to the Critical Incident Management domain. The summary of this literature follows.

Athletic Trainers manage many injuries that are considered relatively minor;¹ however, Athletic Trainers are frequently challenged to react and respond to a wide variety of unpredictable, emergency situations.³⁻
⁵ These immediate and emergency injuries and illnesses can occur during any physical activity,¹ thus requiring knowledge and skill in the preparation for and management of emergency situations.^{3,4} Athletic Trainers have a responsibility to identify and use evidence-based standards of care in preparation for and management of emergency situations.²⁻⁴ The preparation begins prior to an immediate and emergency situation through the development of an emergency action plan (EAP) identifying emergency personnel, equipment, transportation, communication and steps to follow during emergent situations.¹⁻⁴ When an EAP is implemented, an Athletic Trainers must triage and manage the situation using best practices,²⁻⁴ followed by making an appropriate and timely transfer of care or referral.⁴

As healthcare providers in a continuously evolving profession, Athletic Trainers must have the ability to maintain a high level of preparation and proficiency in all aspects of immediate and emergency care. This ability is critical to minimizing risk to the injured participant.

TASK	DESCRIPTION
0301	Implement Emergency Action (Response) Plans for all venues and events to guide appropriate and unified response in order to optimize outcomes.
0302	Triage the severity of health conditions.
0303	Implement appropriate evidence-based emergent care procedures to reduce the risk of morbidity and mortality (e.g., c-spine, airway management, heat illness, pandemics, suicides, other emergent conditions).
0304	Assess the scene to identify appropriate courses of action.

Domain IV: Therapeutic Intervention

DESCRIPTION

Rehabilitating individuals with a health condition (i.e., injury, illness, general medical condition) with the goal of achieving optimal activity and participation levels based on core concepts (i.e., fundamental knowledge and skillsets) using the applications of therapeutic exercise, modality devices, and manual techniques

SUMMARY

The Practice Analysis Task Force reviewed published literature pertaining to the Therapeutic Intervention domain. The summary of this literature follows.

The World Health Organization's International Classification of Health Interventions defines a health intervention as "an act performed for, with or on behalf of a person or a population whose purpose is to assess, improve, maintain, promote or modify health, functioning or health conditions."²⁵ Purposeful interactions between the Athletic Trainer and patients, based upon the findings of an evaluation and designed to positively alter the patient's health condition, are considered therapeutic interventions.^{24,29,45} Athletic Trainers provide therapeutic interventions (e.g., therapeutic exercise, therapeutic modalities and devices, manual therapy, education) to treat and rehabilitate health conditions with the goal of achieving optimal levels of function, health, fitness and wellness for their patients.^{12,24,51,52,53,55}

Selection of specific treatment techniques, practices and procedures are made by the Athletic Trainer using evidence-based principles in collaboration with a physician and in compliance with legal and ethical standards.^{12,24} Specific parameters for each intervention are chosen and modified based upon current assessment findings, response to treatment, progress toward identified goals and contextual factors (e.g., age, gender, culture, psychosocial issues).^{3,8,12,24,52} Athletic Trainers communicate relevant aspects of the rehabilitation process to patients and stakeholders. All examination procedures, tests and treatment techniques used to develop and carryout the plan of care are selected using evidence-based practice principles and along with the plan of care, are recorded through legally defensible documentation.^{7,12,24,29,45}

TASK	DESCRIPTION
0401	Optimize patient outcomes by developing, evaluating, and updating the plan of care.
0402	Educate patients and appropriate stakeholders using pertinent information to optimize patient-centered care and patient engagement throughout the therapeutic intervention process.
0403	Prescribe therapeutic exercises following evidence-based practices to address impairments and enhance activity and participation levels.
0404	Administer therapeutic modalities and devices using evidence-based procedures and parameters to address impairments and enhance activity and participation levels.
0405	Administer manual therapy techniques using evidence-based methods to address impairments and enhance activity and participation levels.
0406	Determine patients' functional status using appropriate techniques and standards to inform decisions about returning to optimal activity and participation levels.
0407	Manage general medical conditions to optimize activity and participation levels.

Domain V: Healthcare Administration and Professional Responsibility

DESCRIPTION

Integrating best practices in policy construction and implementation, documentation and basic business practices to promote optimal patient care and employee well-being

SUMMARY

The Practice Analysis Task Force reviewed published literature pertaining to the Healthcare Administration and Professional Responsibility domain. The summary of this literature follows.

The delivery of quality medical care requires a team working together.^{1,24,25} As healthcare providers, Athletic Trainers play an integral role within an interdisciplinary team collaborating with physicians and other professionals to provide evidence-based care that encompasses risk reduction, critical incident management, clinical diagnosis, therapeutic intervention, and rehabilitation of injuries and medical conditions. This teamwork requires knowledge of each healthcare professional's role and responsibilities to ensure patient-centered medical care.^{13,27-31,14} The Athletic Trainer's knowledge of, respect for, and nurturing of relationships with various other healthcare providers improves the clinical decision-making process and patient care.^{1,24,25,29,31-33} These relationships also foster interdisciplinary learning and the development of new approaches to care based on evidence.^{31,32,34} While an integral part of the medical team, Athletic Trainers also need to manage their jobs in light of their own personal wellbeing.³⁵⁻³⁸ This ongoing approach to team healthcare delivery allows Athletic Trainers to have a leadership role in delivering quality health care.^{22,23,39}

In order to provide high quality healthcare in their varied workplaces, Athletic Trainers must assume administrative roles to accomplish effective and efficient delivery of healthcare services. These roles span disparate workplaces including, but not limited to, clinical, industrial, interscholastic, intercollegiate, and professional sport settings.¹ Regardless of the setting, Athletic Trainers must practice within federal, state, and local laws, regulations, rules, requirements, and professional standards.²⁻⁵

Furthermore, Athletic Trainers must use data to make informed decision's based upon stakeholder needs.^{1,6-9} This data drives the decisions made and the development of policies, procedures, and plans to address organizational needs.^{1,7,9-16} Making evidence-based decisions requires detailed and consistent documentation procedures to ensure alignment with best practices.^{12,17,18}

TASK	DESCRIPTION
0501	Assess organizational and individual outcomes using quality improvement analyses.
0502	Develop policies, procedures, and plans to address organizational needs.
0503	Practice within federal, state, and local laws, regulations, rules, requirements, and professional standards.
0504	Use standardized documentation procedures to ensure best practices.

Weighting of Domains

The PA8 defines the current entry-level knowledge, skills and abilities required for practice in the profession of athletic training. The practice analysis serves as the blueprint for determining the content of the exam. Exam questions represent all five domains of athletic training, with weighting distributed across domains as indicated in the table below.

DOMAIN	PERCENT	N ITEMS
Risk Reduction, Wellness and Health Literacy	20.0%	25
Assessment, Evaluation and Diagnosis	25.6%	32
Critical Incident Management	20.8%	26
Therapeutic Intervention	25.6%	32
Health Administration and Professional Responsibility	8.0%	10

Report of Findings from the 2021 Practice Analysis Study for Athletic Trainers

Document prepared by:
James P. Henderson, PhD,
Psychometrician
Scantron
1313 Lone Oak Road
Eagan, MN 55121
SCANTRON.com

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Address inquiries in writing to Board of Certification, 1415 Harney St. Suite 200, Omaha, NE 68102