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Home > [Journal of Athletic Training](#) > [July/August 2009](#) > Novice to Expert Practice via Postprofessional Athletic Training Educa...

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[◀ Previous Article](#) [Volume 44, Issue 4 \(July/August 2009\)](#) [Next Article ▶](#)

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### Original Research

## Novice to Expert Practice via Postprofessional Athletic Training Education: A Grounded Theory

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### Abstract

**Objective:** To discover the theoretic constructs that confirm, disconfirm, or extend the principles and their applications appropriate for National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA)-accredited postprofessional athletic training education programs.

**Design:** Interviews at the 2003 NATA Annual Meeting & Clinical Symposia.

**Setting:** Qualitative study using grounded theory procedures.

**Patients and Other Participants:** Thirteen interviews were conducted with postprofessional graduates. Participants were purposefully selected based on theoretic sampling and availability.

**Data Collection and Analysis:** The transcribed interviews were analyzed using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding procedures. Member checks, reflective journaling, and triangulation were used to ensure trustworthiness.

**Results:** The participants' comments confirmed and extended the current principles of postprofessional athletic training education programs and offered additional suggestions for more effective practical applications.

**Conclusions:** The emergence of this central category of *novice to expert practice* is a paramount finding. The tightly woven fabric of the 10 processes, when interlaced with one another, provides a strong tapestry supporting novice to expert practice via postprofessional athletic training education. The emergence of this theoretic position pushes postprofessional graduate athletic training education forward to the future for further investigation into the theoretic constructs of novice to expert practice.

**Keywords:** [athletic trainers](#), [education](#), [qualitative research](#)

*Peter J. Neibert, PhD, ATC, provided conception and design; acquisition and*

Volume 44, Issue 4  
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[◀ Previous](#) [Next ▶](#)



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analysis and interpretation of the data; and drafting, critical revision, and final approval of the article.

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[top](#) ▲

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