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Stacy E. Walker, Thomas G. Weidner, Kirk J. Armstrong (2008) Evaluation of Athletic Training Students' Clinical Proficiencies. *Journal of Athletic Training*: July/August 2008, Vol. 43, No. 4, pp. 386-395.

doi: 10.4085/1062-6050-43.4.386

Original Research

Evaluation of Athletic Training Students' Clinical Proficiencies

Stacy E. Walker, PhD, ATC, Thomas G. Weidner, PhD, ATC, FNATA, and Kirk J. Armstrong, EdD, ATC

Ball State University, Muncie, IN

Abstract

Context: Appropriate methods for evaluating clinical proficiencies are essential in ensuring entry-level competence.

Objective: To investigate the common methods athletic training education programs use to evaluate student performance of clinical proficiencies.

Design: Cross-sectional design.

Setting: Public and private institutions nationwide.

Patients or Other Participants: All program directors of athletic training education programs accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs as of January 2006 ($n = 337$); 201 (59.6%) program directors responded.

Data Collection and Analysis: The institutional survey consisted of 11 items regarding institutional and program demographics. The 14-item Methods of Clinical Proficiency Evaluation in Athletic Training survey consisted of respondents' demographic characteristics and Likert-scale items regarding clinical proficiency evaluation methods and barriers, educational content areas, and clinical experience settings. We used analyses of variance and independent t tests to assess differences among athletic training education program characteristics and the barriers, methods, content areas, and settings regarding clinical proficiency evaluation.

Results: Of the 3 methods investigated, simulations ($n = 191$, 95.0%) were the most prevalent method of clinical proficiency evaluation. An independent-samples t test revealed that more opportunities existed for real-time evaluations in the college or high school athletic training room ($t_{189} = 2.866$, $P = .037$) than in other settings. Orthopaedic clinical examination and diagnosis (4.37 ± 0.826) and therapeutic modalities (4.36 ± 0.738) content areas were scored the highest in sufficient opportunities for real-time clinical proficiency evaluations. An inadequate volume of injuries or conditions (3.99 ± 1.033) and injury/condition occurrence not

Volume 43, Issue 4 (July/August 2008)

< [Previous](#)



[Next](#) >

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Print ISSN 1062-6050

eISSN 1938-162X

Frequency Bimonthly:

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coinciding with the clinical proficiency assessment timetable (4.06 ± 0.995) were barriers to real-time evaluation. One-way analyses of variance revealed no difference between athletic training education program characteristics and the opportunities for and barriers to real-time evaluations among the various clinical experience settings.

Conclusions: No one primary barrier hindered real-time clinical proficiency evaluation. To determine athletic training students' clinical proficiency for entry-level employment, athletic training education programs must incorporate standardized patients or take a disciplined approach to using simulation for instruction and evaluation.

Keywords: [standardized patients](#), [clinical competence](#), [clinical instruction](#), [evaluation barriers](#)

Stacy E. Walker, PhD, ATC; Thomas G. Weidner, PhD, ATC, FNATA; and Kirk J. Armstrong, EdD, ATC, contributed to conception and design; acquisition and analysis and interpretation of the data; and drafting, critical revision, and final approval of the article.

Address correspondence to Stacy E. Walker, PhD, ATC, Ball State University, School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Science, Muncie, IN 47306. Address e-mail to sewalker@bsu.edu.

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Online publication date: 1-Mar-2010.

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Online publication date: 1-Nov-2009.

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