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Original Research

Role Strain in Collegiate Athletic Training Approved Clinical Instructors

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Abstract

Context: Certified athletic trainers who serve as Approved Clinical Instructors (ACIs) in the collegiate setting are balancing various roles (eg, patient care and related administrative tasks, clinical education). Whether this balancing act is associated with role strain in athletic trainers has not been examined.

Objective: To examine the degree of, and contributing factors (eg, socialization experiences, professional and employment demographics, job congruency) to, role strain in collegiate ACIs.

Design: Cross-sectional survey design.

Setting: Geographically stratified random sample of ACIs affiliated with accredited athletic training education programs at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I, II, and III institutions.

Patients or Other Participants: 118 collegiate ACIs (47 head athletic trainers, 45 assistant athletic trainers, 26 graduate assistant athletic trainers).

Main Outcome Measure(s): The Athletic Training ACI Role Strain Inventory, which measures total degree of role strain, 7 subscales of role strain, socialization experiences, professional and employment characteristics, and congruency in job responsibilities.

Results: A total of 49% (n = 58) of the participants experienced a moderate to high degree of role strain. Role Overload was the highest contributing subscale to total role strain. No differences were noted between total role strain and role occupant groups, NCAA division, or sex. Graduate assistant athletic trainers experienced a greater degree of role incompetence than head athletic trainers did ($P = .001$). Division II ACIs reported a greater degree of inter-role conflict than those in Division I ($P = .02$). Female ACIs reported a greater degree of role incompetence than male ACIs ($P = .01$). Those ACIs who stated that the ACI training provided by their institution did not adequately prepare them for the role as an ACI experienced

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greater role strain ($P < .001$).

Conclusions: The ACIs in the collegiate setting are experiencing role strain in balancing their roles as health care providers, clinical educators, and administrators. Methods to reduce role strain need to be considered.

Keywords: [socialization](#), [role incompetence](#), [role overload](#), [role conflict](#)

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