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Original Research

Choosing a Career in Athletic Training: Exploring the Perceptions of Potential Recruits

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Abstract

Context: The success of any academic program, including athletic training, depends upon attracting and keeping quality students. Therefore, understanding potential recruits' perceptions of athletic training is important.

Objective: To (1) gain insight regarding undergraduate students' decisions to enter or not enter an athletic training education program (ATEP), and (2) examine potential athletic training recruits' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of certified athletic trainers.

Design: We used a descriptive study employing a grounded theory approach to explore perceptions of the athletic training profession by college students with various levels of interest in athletic training.

Setting: Athletic training education program from a National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I research-intensive university.

Patients or Other Participants: Forty-six undergraduate students (23 interested in applying to an ATEP and 23 who were aware of but not interested in applying to an ATEP).

Main Outcome Measure(s): Data from in-depth, semi-structured interviews were transcribed and analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding procedures. Member checks and peer-debriefing techniques were used to ensure trustworthiness of the study.

Results: Three contributing factors appeared to influence the recruitment of students to a career in athletic training: (1) a strong affiliation to a sports/team model, (2) initial exposure at the high school level, and (3) an incomplete understanding of athletic training.

Conclusions: Awareness of how students are recruited into ATEPs is important information for our profession. Educators and administrators must create a comprehensive recruitment strategy using factors that influence potential recruits'

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decisions to enter the athletic training profession, specifically their association with sports and their experiences during high school.

Keywords: [socialization](#), [subjective warrant](#), [recruitment](#), [career choice](#)

James Mensch, PhD, ATC, contributed to conception and design; analysis and interpretation of the data; and drafting, critical revision, and final approval of the article. Murray Mitchell, PhD, contributed to conception and design; analysis and interpretation of the data; and critical revision and final approval of the article.

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