

THE ROLE OF ATHLETIC TRAINERS IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Rationale: Modern public health focuses on preventing disease and promoting lifelong health. As athletic trainers, we have a unique opportunity to serve our communities as public health workers if we can accurately identify and engage in those opportunities.

Objectives: Discuss the framework of public health and how it focuses on the population as well as a particular patient. Discuss how athletic trainers are integral members of the public health infrastructure. Recommend strategies about how athletic trainers can partner with other community members and healthcare providers to improve the public health infrastructure of their community, state, and nation.

Description: Public health is a multi-disciplinary approach to health and wellness. Generally, public health workers are concerned with three primary areas: assessment of health problems, creation of policies to address these health issues, and implementation of prevention, health, and wellness programming. Similarly, if we evaluate the domains of athletic training (injury/illness prevention and wellness protection, clinical evaluation and diagnosis, immediate and emergency care, treatment and rehabilitation, organizational and professional health and well-being) it is clear to see the natural overlap between public health and athletic training. This presentation will provide examples of how athletic trainers are an integral component of the public health workforce, how our research is providing a better understanding of the health and wellness of our athletic population, and how everything from our pre-participation physical examinations to functional movement screen testing are all done to improve the health and wellness of our communities. Additionally, athletic trainers have a long history of playing an important role in creating policies to improve the safety of all individuals who participate in physical activity.

Key Words: population health, dimensions of health and wellness, physical well-being