The Athletic Training Triad: NATA, JRC-AT and NATABOC

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Not too long ago the NATA was the sole entity that oversaw the education and certification of athletic trainers. Entry-level and advanced graduate education was the purview of the NATA's Professional Education Committee while the Certification Committee handled individual credentialing issues. One call to the national office would resolve the entire spectrum of issues

But that was then and this is now.

The growth of athletic training as a profession and the NATA as an organization has resulted in the distribution of roles and responsibilities, creating an athletic training triad. The NATA is a membership/trade association. The Joint-Review Committee on Athletic Training (JRC-AT) is an independent agency that, through the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP), accredits entry-level athletic training education programs. The NATA Board of Certification (NATABOC), Inc. is also an independent agency that is responsible for the initial and on-going credentialing of athletic trainers.

Similar to the structure of the U.S. federal government, the NATA, JRC-AT and the NATABOC form a "check-and-balance" system that assures the integrity of the ATC credential. The NATA Education Council serves as a clearinghouse for common issues between these agencies and these agencies and the membership.

joint review committee on athletic training

The JRC-AT is a branch of CAAHEP that is responsible for establishing the Standards and Guidelines (Standards) for entry-level athletic training education programs. These Standards provide the basis of entry-level education for the athletic training profession through instruction of educational competencies and clinical proficiencies. Designees from the JRC-AT review the institutional written self-studies and conduct site visitations of programs that have applied for initial or continuing accreditation. Based on this feedback, the JRC-AT makes a recommendation in support of (or against) accreditation to the CAAHEP Board of Directors, the group who ultimately grants accreditation.

While it is the program that becomes accredited, accreditation itself protects students (and potential students) from academic programs that lack quality and/or do not accurately represent the true course of study.

nata board of certification, inc.

The NATABOC's mission is to protect the public by identifying competent practitioners of athletic training. This is accomplished through eligibility requirements, the entry-level credentialing examination and continuing competency requirements. Decisions made by the NATABOC are made in the best interests of the public and the protection of the credential awarded by the NATABOC. Additionally, the NATABOC must adhere to the standards and guidelines of the National Commission for Certifying Agencies. The NATABOC also approves continuing education providers.

national athletic trainers' association, inc.

The NATA is a member-based trade association that strives to enhance the quality of health care delivered by certified athletic trainers. The NATA Education Council is the branch of the NATA that serves as a clearinghouse between the NATA membership, the JRC-AT and the NATABOC and also serves as a "think tank" for various educational issues.

Although the Education Council is most commonly associated with entry-level education primarily because of the current reforms, this group also oversees post-certification graduate education and develops continuing education programming.

At times the wants and needs of the NATA, JRC-AT and NATABOC are different, seemingly making these groups seem to be in conflict with each other, a perception that may or may not be accurate. However, the working relationship between these groups is one of cooperation. It's the ultimate symbiotic relationship. Each group must rely on the other for survival and are bonded together with a common mission: The advancement of the athletic training profession. nn