Mazerolle SM, Ruiz RC, Casa DJ, et al. Evidence-Based Practice and the Recognition and Treatment of Exertional Heat Stroke, Part I: A Perspective From the Athletic Training Educator. *J Athl Train.* 2011;46(5):523–532.

Mazerolle SM, Pinkus DE, Casa DJ, et al. Evidence-Based Medicine and the Recognition and Treatment of Exertional Heat Stroke, Part II: A Perspective From the Clinical Athletic Trainer. *J Athl Train*. 2011;46(5):533–542.

Commentary

William A. Pitney, EdD, ATC, FNATA

These articles by Mazerolle and colleagues offer a critical analysis of one aspect of our professional practice from the perspectives of both practitioners and educators. I applaud the authors for their work, as I believe we must continually examine best practices and the extent to which they are being implemented. I would like to discuss here 2 aspects of the articles that are of particular interest to me and offer questions throughout for athletic training professionals to consider.

The perspectives from the athletic training educators shared by the authors led me to the question “why do minimums become maximums?” That is to say, even though at the time of the study the 4th edition *Educational Competencies* were in place and the skills of rectal thermometry and cold-water immersion were not explicitly required, does that mean we, as educators, should not strive to teach our students best practices? I praise the authors for identifying this paradox. Although the *Competencies* at the time were not explicit about these skills, the authors did acknowledge that current practice is dynamic and educators are to incorporate position statements and related guidelines into curricula. Perhaps we need a mechanism to ensure that educators and athletic training education programs think beyond a competency matrix and the verbatim language in the published *Educational Competencies*. Although this would present a logistical challenge, making a portion of the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) standards dynamic and allowing for the integration of new knowledge and skills related to position statements as they are developed or updated might raise the bar for all programs. The authors provide practical ways to address the problems, and this is an excellent start. I cannot help but think that context matters here, too. Do the privacy and public opinion issues and lack of laboratory instruction reflect the housing of most athletic training education programs? Would these issues be different if all such programs were housed in colleges of medicine or health professions?

The perspectives of clinical athletic trainers underscored, for me at least, the importance of formal continuing education to increase the knowledge and skill level of practitioners. Although we would like to think that every professional in every discipline will engage in appropriate education and training to stay abreast of new knowledge and guidelines when they are released, the reality is that this is not occurring to the fullest extent possible. Perhaps mandatory completion of educational objectives related to new position statements and the associated knowledge and skills should be embedded in our continuing education processes. Even when practitioners do stay current, however, it is clear from the study findings that contextual restraints (eg, lack of resources, lack of administrative support) prevent the implementation of knowledge and skill. The context matters. This is at best discouraging to me. How can we assist practitioners in obtaining the appropriate resources and fostering the appropriate and necessary administrative support to implement a standard of care?

Lastly, I personally found the theme “lack of initiative” disheartening. We may intend to stay current and integrate knowledge and skill into professional practice to provide the best care possible, but as Carolyn Myss stated, “Intention without action is useless.”1

As with many studies, as many questions arise as are answered. I appreciate the opportunity to share some thoughts and concerns and raise some questions for discussion. I hope this commentary initiates dialogue, and I look forward to your comments.

Reference

1. Myss C. *Entering the Castle: Finding the Inner Path to God and Your Soul's Purpose*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster; 2007.