



Athletic Training in the Occupational Health Setting: An FAQ for Athletic Trainers

Occupational and industrial workers are at risk of acute and overuse on-the-job injuries. Their work environment requires special skills often including heavy lifting, carrying, movement and physical stress. Athletic trainers (ATs) can assist employees with services including ergonomics assistance, injury prevention, stretching programs, early recognition program, onsite physical rehabilitation, working with aging workforce, wellness and safety.

Athletic training is practiced by athletic trainers, health care professionals who collaborate with physicians to optimize activity and participation of patients and clients. Athletic training encompasses the prevention, diagnosis, and intervention of emergency, acute, and chronic medical conditions involving impairment, functional limitations, and disabilities.

What are the employment opportunities for this setting?

Athletic trainers are routinely employed in manufacturing plants including automotive assembly and distribution center warehouses, tire manufacturing plants, airline assembling, general assembly plants, processing facilities and distribution centers. ATs focus on injury prevention, also known as upstream management. ATs routinely conduct biomechanical assessments, work-site evaluations, individual and group interactions with the intent of reducing injuries and improving employee's health. Emerging opportunities exist for ATs looking to diversify their work experiences.

ATs in the occupational health setting have:

- 1) Increased job opportunity
- 2) Higher salaries
- 3) Career development opportunity
- 4) Fewer required work hours
- 5) Work-life balance

ATs increase productivity and efficiency by focusing on the prevention of musculoskeletal injuries and upstream management through early intervention. The AT's goal is to address worker's complaints early before they become chronic or severely limit the employee to perform their work duties and affect their activities of daily living (ADL). The athletic trainer often performs the function of the initial care giver (injury triage) and utilizes a variety of tools at their disposal. These include skills often seen in the traditional athletic setting as well as programs specific to their work setting. In some cases, the athletic trainer may be the only health care provider, performing initial assessment and triage which may include treatment regimens in accordance with State and Federal regulations. Often, the athletic trainer acts as an integral part of the overall health and safety team, providing proper referral, early intervention and expediting the care of the worker. They often work in conjunction with safety personnel, facility management, union representatives, ergonomists, physicians and other health care providers.

Billing for ATs in the Occupational Health setting

Most often, the athletic trainer is employed by an organization to provide onsite services (prevention, early recognition, rehabilitation and more), or is contracted with an employer to provide their services.

There may be possibilities for the athletic trainer to provide additional services or products, such as orthotics or non-rigid supports. In cases like this, the athletic trainer will completely disclose with their employer and seek consent before beginning a service outside of their regular duties. ATs should check their state practice act that will provide more details on working under a physician or other licensed healthcare provider. In most cases, employers also have physicians as “medical directors” either on-site or contracted off-site.

State Practice Act:

Check the state practice act link below. If your state has a very restrictive practice act, you need to research the employment opportunity and speak with a hiring authority, probably the administrator for the physician practice.

<http://www.nata.org/state-practice-acts>

Click here for more information on state regulatory boards:

<http://cf.nata.org/legislators/map.htm?q=state-government/regulatory-boards>

If you need additional information contact Judy Pulice at the NATA Office: JudyP@nata.org

Reimbursement:

Depending on the insurance company, you may be able to bill for services. For more information visit NATA Reimbursement:

<http://www.nata.org/revenue-resources/reimbursement/reimbursement-faqs>

NATA Career Center:

To find a job in a physicians office please go to the NATA Career Center:

<http://www.nata.org/career-center>

2011 Salary Survey information:

<http://www.nata.org/sites/default/files/SalarySurvey11.pdf>

Tips for getting a job in the Occupational Health setting:

ATs should seek employers who utilize athletic trainers in occupational and industrial settings. These may be employers who have contracts with companies who hire ATs to provide athletic training services or may be on individual cases where the AT is employed directly with a company to provide the service. In all cases, it is best to develop relationships with health and safety personnel, management and union leadership (where unions are present), and diversify your clinical skills and experiences while focusing on the prevention of injury. Additional tips for getting hired in this setting include:

- Remain on the cutting edge of sports medicine
- Obtain education in areas of other health care
- Develop good skills in evaluation and management of musculoskeletal injuries
- Improve your ability to work and communicate with many types of people/personalities
- Be prepared for a diverse environment where days are rarely the same
- Prove that you are an independent practitioner who has the ability to build a business, deal with adversity and challenges and that you are innovative in your approach with the single vision to drive down an employer's health care costs by reducing work place injuries

Other Benefits for Physicians Using ATs in the Occupational Health setting:

- ATs are often the “on-site” contact for physicians and are the first line of defense in injury prevention. They work one-on-one with physicians as an integral part of the health care team.
- They expedite care with timely triage and proper referral, minimize lags in the healthcare delivery and ultimately reduce costs with early intervention and case management.
- ATs are the subject matter expert and communicate employee policies and procedures established by physicians and other personnel.

Additional Information:

Academic Qualifications:

- Minimum:
 - Bachelor Degree with major in athletic training, holds the ATC (Athletic Trainer, Certified) credential
 - Eligible to be regulated in the state they will be practicing in.
 - Experience with injury evaluation and rehabilitation
- Preferred:
 - Master's Degree in athletic training or related area if the bachelor's is in athletic training. 2-3 years of experience with injury evaluation and implementing comprehensive injury management strategies
 - Computer skills involving PowerPoint, Excel, and Access
 - Certified Orthopedic Technologist

2. Additional Certifications:

- Additional certifications in fields such as ergonomics, strength and conditioning, manual therapy skills, education and health and safety are beneficial.

3. Work Load:

- Hours: 40 -45 hrs/wk, usually Monday – Friday only. Work Load: Work load remains stable throughout the year. Holiday periods are similar to those of the facility where you work.
- Travel: None

4. Job Profile:

- Day-to-Day:

- Daily interface with employees to perform injury evaluation, injury prevention, and education programs focused on injury prevention and home health care, pre-employment screening, injury management, some limited injury rehabilitation, health education, nutrition, training and conditioning, report writing and documentation.
- No emergency care

Supervision: Supervising Physician(s)

- Job Security:
 - Continuance of job depends upon ATs job performance and return on investment based upon cost savings associated with programs the ATs are involved in.

5. Supervision:

- Director - AT
- Physician