



## **Executive Summary: Athletic trainers provide return on investment and decreased injuries in occupational work settings**

By Craig Halls, MBA, LAT, CEES

### **OVERVIEW**

A new survey by the National Athletic Trainers' Association shows that athletic trainers (ATs) working full-time in occupational and industrial settings provide companies positive return-on-investment for each dollar spent on athletic training programs. Employing an athletic trainer can decrease company health care costs through injury prevention and injury management programs.

The 2008 survey solidifies findings from a 2003 NATA survey, in which companies overwhelmingly reported that an athletic trainer provided positive return on investment. Using their skills and knowledge in designing injury prevention programs and return-to-work programs, athletic trainers keep employees working at full capacity, reduce claims, improve company productivity and reduce workers compensation, health care and insurance costs. Athletic trainers are highly qualified, motivated health care providers who help a company achieve its health, safety and profitability goals.

### **SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS**

The wide range of knowledge and expertise of an athletic trainer allows them to provide numerous health and safety programs, which according to the survey respondents has lead to the following benefits:

- Of companies that kept return on investment (ROI) data, 100 percent reported a positive ROI with more than 80 percent indicating a ROI of \$3 or more for every \$1 invested.
- More than 85 percent of companies reported that both the number and costs of work-related injuries decreased by at least 25 percent.
- More than 90 percent of respondents indicated employee days away from work decreased by 25 percent or more at their company.
- Almost half of the companies had their emergency room costs reduced by 50 percent or more.
- More than 50 percent of surveyed companies reported a decrease in costs associated with workplace injuries.
  - Of these companies, 35 percent reported a decrease in costs of more than 50 percent.

### **WORKERS COMPENSATION AND HEALTHCARE COSTS**

- Of companies that tracked their workers' compensation:
- 63 percent reported that the athletic trainer made an impact on their workers compensation costs within 6 months.
  - 96 percent reported that the athletic trainer made an impact on their workers compensation within 1 year.

- Of respondents that followed their healthcare costs:
  - 45 percent reported that the athletic trainer made an impact on healthcare costs within 6 months.
  - 100 percent reported that the athletic trainer made an impact on healthcare costs within 1 year.

### **RETURN ON INVESTMENT**

- Of the companies that tracked their return on investment:
  - 2 (7.7%) reported a ROI of \$1
  - 3 (11.5%) reported a ROI of \$2
  - 3 (11.5%) reported a ROI of \$3
  - 6 (23.1%) reported a ROI of \$3 - \$5
  - 6 (23.1%) reported a ROI of \$5 - \$7
  - 6 (23.1%) reported a ROI of more than \$7

### **JOB DUTIES**

Responding companies reported a variety of valuable job duties performed by their athletic trainers. Companies indicated that athletic trainers provide injury prevention, stretching and ergonomic programs, rehabilitation services, educational programs, fitness, nutrition, work hardening, first aid and serve as first responders for acute injuries and illnesses.

- 97 percent of companies used athletic trainers to provide educational programs.
- 90 percent of companies used athletic trainers to provide health and wellness programs.
- 90 percent of companies used athletic trainers to provide injury prevention programs.
- 81 percent of companies used athletic trainers to provide ergonomic assessments and programming.
- Other duties athletic trainers provide include stretching programs, serving as safety representatives, First Aid and CPR, initial injury assessment and triage, return to work, fitness, nutrition, work hardening, health risk assessments, pre-employment physicals, case management and functional capacity evaluations.

### **About the author**

Craig Halls, MBA, ATC, LAT, CEES, is the Total Health Manager at Aurora Health Care. He has spoken at numerous national conferences, including the National Safety Congress and the National Athletic Trainers' Association. He has been a featured author in *Occupational Health and Safety* magazine as well as many other publications. Craig has more than 12-years of experience in occupational health, ergonomics, wellness and injury prevention.

### **About athletic trainers**

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.

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