

INTO THE *History* OF NATA'S FOUNDING EVENT

The genesis and growth of the NATA Clinical Symposia & AT Expo

By Lydia Hicks

The NATA Clinical Symposia & AT Expo started with two brothers. Now, it is the largest sports medicine gathering marked with a host of professional development, connection, support and advocacy opportunities.

Acknowledging the need for ATs to gather and exchange ideas, Brothers Frank and Chuck Cramer, who pioneered the sports medicine field and established Cramer Products, helped found NATA concurrently with the first convention, formerly known as the annual meeting.

While 1949 was the first time AT professionals gathered, “1950 was the first organized meeting held in Kansas City, Missouri, at the Hotel Muehlebach, with a group of 150 to 200 people,” said NATA Historical Commission Chair Roger Kalisiak, AT Ret.

Growing Through CEU Offerings

Since the American Medical Association started recognizing athletic training as an allied health profession in the late 1960s, the NATA convention's growth has been driven by the offering of continuing education units (CEUs), a variety of speakers and keynote addresses, Kalisiak said.

“It was deemed that you had to have so many units per year to keep your certification as an AT current,” he said. “The first CEUs were offered in 1979 and were one of the drivers of growing the convention.”

Since the '70s, this education offering has more than doubled from its initial eight CEUs provided. However, not only did the CEU offering at a national level help expand the meetings, Kalisiak said, the districts' CEU offerings for attending convention drove the growth as well.

“For instance, in what used to be District Four, which was a six-state region at that time, there was an opportunity to get about 18 CEUs, coupled with the national meeting, which provided 20,” he said. “So, those numbers continued to grow as people needed more.”

Growing Through Partnerships

By 1955, the convention venue moved to Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana, where NATA expanded opportunities for sponsorships and enlisted external participation.

With the convention poised for further growth in 1980, under the auspices of Fred Hoover from Clemson University in South Carolina and Tim Kerin from the University of Tennessee, the idea of getting more sponsors emanated, spurring the development of the AT Expo, which



As life began to return to the new normal across the country, attendees “Reunited AT Last” at the 73rd NATA Clinical Symposia & AT Expo in June 2022 in Philadelphia.

still provides thousands of attendees with access to the latest in products and services in sports medicine today.

“In 1985, they had a new corporate sponsorship, Gatorade,” Kalisiak said. “Then Johnson & Johnson and Tylenol sponsored, but Cramer products was still a founding sponsor.”

Beyond the participation of sponsors, convention also birthed coalitions and NATA subdivisions not only serving the needs of athletic trainers, but also further facilitating its growth and bringing exposure to the profession. This includes the NATA Research & Education Foundation, NATA Career Center, PEC, Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education, ATs Care Commission and NATA Intercollegiate Council for Sports Medicine.

“With time, the need for a separate convention committee became clearer as the education program became more robust,” Kalisiak said. “The executive director of NATA became part of the convention committee as well as an exhibitor representative, educational program chair, an incoming program chair, a host city chair that recruited volunteer ATs and additional NATA staff members to help deliver first-class educational programing.”

Growing Through Community

From a humble beginning of approximately 200 attendees in 1950 to thousands of

registrants today, the NATA convention has fostered community among ATs. The AT community has not only made convention a hub of sports medicine professional development, but also camaraderie.

“Over the years, feedback was that it was educationally profitable and affordable,” Kalisiak said. “And it’s gotten better over the years. Technology has been a big booster. Early on, when they were able to, [convention organizers] started showing slides. [This technology] was a big boost.

“Then people came together not only to the clinical sessions, but they would also go out for dinner or to a bar. Then the Cramer brothers hosted a reception for everybody who would like an opportunity to socialize – about 200 people out on their farm. But also, you could look to somebody else and they would look to somebody and say, ‘How do you take care of this?’ ‘What do you do about that?’”

By 2004, Convention Daily News supported convention news coverage with advertisements, which spurred attendee participation further, Kalisiak said.

The Board of Certification for the Athletic Trainer also collaborated on a golf outing for many years, he said. This event grew over the years, expanding to two courses. The traditional social event at the beginning was another way for attendees to relax before the educational sessions began. Gatorade also sponsored fun run fundraisers, while individual schools and universities had alumnae socials.

Furthermore, networking took place, especially via the NATA Career Center, NATA Gear Store, and NATA Hall of Fame Breakfast, among other offerings, all helping build community.

With convention’s return to Kansas City in 1990 came an old-time anniversary room, which celebrated the annual meeting’s 40th anniversary, Kalisiak said.

By 2020 and 2021, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the virtual convention was successful and another way to bring people together.

As life began to return to the new normal across the country, attendees were “Reunited AT Last” at the 73rd NATA Clinical Symposia & AT Expo in 2022.

The NATA 2022 Keynote, Face Time ’22 and General Session were three of the most anticipated segments of convention. At the



On June 24, 1950, about 200 athletic trainers met in Kansas City, Missouri, for the profession’s first organized meeting. Now, thousands meet each summer for the NATA convention, the premier educational and networking event for ATs.

Pennsylvania Convention Center, a host of attendees leaned in to hear from NATA’s leaders, glean from their experiences and receive updates on the state of the association.

For their professional development, ATs could choose from more than 150 educational sessions to attend and earn up to 20 CEUs. Across a variety of topics and formats, NATA 2022 featured top-tier athletic training educational programming, bringing together experts from around the world to deliver a focused and practical learning experience.

The NATA Foundation also presented attendees with various opportunities to learn about the latest research and developments in sports medicine, celebrate and mingle with award winners and raise funds for the future of the athletic training profession.

The NATA Student Leadership Committee also organized the Athletic Training Student Seminar, an annual event during convention, to give students a more in-depth look at the profession and to start networking.

At the NATA 2022 AT Expo, as exhibitors showcased thousands of opportunities, attendees flocked to the booths, helping themselves to presentations, contests, giveaways, insightful demonstrations, Q&As and experiences for their AT settings.

Furthermore, among many other events, the “Championing Title IX and Women in Health Care” event at the NATA 2022 proved Title IX’s far-reaching influence as 12

representatives from leading sports and health care associations convened to discuss 50 years of progress and where we go from here.

Convention Today

Registration is now open for the 74th NATA Clinical Symposia & AT Expo, June 21-24 at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis.

The largest gathering of ATs worldwide, NATA 2023, which features the theme, “ATs Advance Here,” offers a variety of educational sessions for in-person attendees to earn up to 20 CEUs as well as opportunities to grow their athletic training network and make connections that will benefit and advance their careers.

NATA 2023 Programming

There is a plethora of topics covered at convention, including sessions that focus on the NATA 2023 key themes, “Data-Driven Practice” and “Optimizing Return to Work, Life and Sport.” Attendees will be equipped to enhance their patient care at NATA 2023 with the latest in continuing professional development programming and skills that they can apply to their practice immediately.

Registrants will have the opportunity to choose from multiple sessions, including interactive lectures, during which presenters will engage attendees by including videos, demonstrations, small group discussion and/or interactive polling during the session.

Multiple learning labs will be offered allowing attendees to participate in hands-on, practical experiences.

Free Communications Oral Sessions allow for quick chunks of learning to happen with six-minute presentations. The Free Communications Program on-site posters will also return to convention along with the chance to chat with poster presenters. The posters allow the opportunity to learn about the latest in athletic training research.

Attendees can further their learning by attending optional preconference workshops, including Advanced Track Seminars, which allow for earning additional Category A CEUs. Additional fees apply for preconference events. Peruse the preliminary program for a look at the sessions and lectures that will be offered at NATA 2023.

There's More

NATA 2023 also provides other opportunities for connection, including NATA Research & Education Foundation events and the popular AT Expo, where ATs

can talk to vendors in person to address their needs.

Noncertified student attendees can get an inside look at the profession through exclusive educational programming held during the Athletic Training Student Seminar, hosted by the NATA Student Leadership Committee. They can also be inspired by athletic training legends, while learning about potential career paths and expanding their circle of peers. (Read more on p. 21 of the March *NATA News*.)

Registrants of in-person convention will also receive complimentary access to NATA 2023 On-Demand where they can view the NATA Foundation Free Communications Poster Presentations, access the AT Expo exhibitor listing and watch select sessions recorded in Indianapolis. In-person attendees who were not able to earn all 20 CEUs in person can earn their remaining CEUs in the on-demand virtual platform.

For more information and to register, visit convention.nata.org.

NATA 2023 Travel and Housing
Convention travel and accommodation information can be found at convention.nata.org/travel.

NATA has worked hard to secure the lowest hotel rates for attendees and exhibitors, available only through its official housing provider, Convention Management Resources (CMR), hsg.cmrus.com/nata2023/Housing/Reservation.

Enjoy competitive room rates, no prepayment at the time of booking and complete CMR reservation process support. For the best availability, attendees are encouraged to reserve their housing through CMR by June 1. Reservations will continue to be accepted June 2-13, but are subject to availability and may be limited. NATA 2023 housing closes June 14.

Convention Tomorrow

For inquiries about convention or to share your ideas for future conventions, contact membership@nata.org §

DAT or DAT-MBA, *your choice*



moravian.edu/DAT • 610-861-1400

MORAVIAN
UNIVERSITY

