

MEET THE NATA COMMITTEE ON

Professional Ethics

Experts on ethical health care offer guidance, accountability

BY CLAIRE WILLIAMS

Athletic trainers use ethics to help guide their decision-making and clinical care – ethical waypoints, such as the NATA Code of Ethics, help all ATs maintain the highest standards in patient care and the profession. NATA wants to ensure all members have the tools to practice ethically, and the resources to hold themselves accountable.

Enter the NATA Committee on Professional Ethics (COPE) – the volunteer committee that helps members understand the ins and outs of what practicing ethical athletic training means and how it impacts them.

COPE is responsible for enforcing the NATA Code of Ethics and membership standards, sanctions and procedures. The committee also reviews and addresses ethics complaints and ascertains that these are all up to date and not in conflict with federal or state laws, rules and regulations or NATA policy.

In total, there are 20 members of COPE: one voting member and one at-large member from each district. Every district is represented by a member with an interest or background in ethics.

Members are encouraged to connect with their district representative for more information about the NATA Code of Ethics or membership standards, and for any ethical guidance. Read on to see a full list of district representatives, and to hear from some of them on the importance of ethical health care.

For more information about COPE and to file an ethics complaint, visit www.nata.org/committee-professional-ethics. You can also review the NATA Code of Ethics at www.nata.org/membership/about-membership/member-resources/code-of-ethics.

What does ethics mean to you?

**John Roslien, MS, LAT, ATC,
District Five Representative:**

“Ethics provide a professional framework for us to hold ourselves accountable to each other, our patients and the public. COPE provides all constituents a measuring stick to frame decisions and behaviors; we work within the NATA Code of Ethics to determine whether or not a member’s actions are within the standard of care.”

**Dominic Di Manna, MEd, LAT, ATC,
District Seven Representative:**

“As an athletic trainer, ethics means treating all patients in a fair and equitable fashion. As a COPE representative, ethics means holding the membership to fair and consistent standards as defined by the NATA Code of Ethics.”

Why are you passionate about encouraging members to practice ethically?

**Paul Rupp, MS, LAT, ATC,
District Three Representative:**

“The profession has given me so much, and this is a way I can give back to the profession, to protect the profession, our peers and our patients.”

**Robert Huggins, PhD, LAT, ATC,
District One Representative:**

“I am passionate because I have seen too many situations where unethical behaviors lead to individuals being hurt or even die. I understand that we are human and that we all make mistakes or have lapses in judgement, but we need to learn from these mistakes and maintain high ethical standards if we want to continue to have respect from others.”

**Dominic Di Manna, MEd, LAT, ATC,
District Seven Representative:**

“We set the standards by which our profession is judged and perceived by present and future health care professionals.”

How does practicing ethically impact the athletic training profession as a whole?

**Amber Melick, MS, ATC,
District Four Representative:**

“Professional ethics represents the values of a profession. There are three critical elements to athletic training excellence: knowledge, skills and ethical practice. The athletic training profession has a social contract with society in the provision of our practice. Besides guaranteeing society of our competence (through our education and certification/state licensing), altruism and advocating for the general health of those we care for, ensuring self-regulation of the professional values of NATA members is perhaps one of the most critical elements the athletic training profession offers the public.”

**Matt Quijano, MA, ATC,
District Eight Representative:**

“As athletic trainers, we are providing health care services to a wide range of demographics. It is not uncommon for a high school athletic trainer to be a student athlete’s primary source of health care in general. Because of this, and many more reasons, it is important

that athletic trainers present themselves with the highest of professional ethics so student athletes gain trust in the health care system. If athletic trainers can help even one student athlete gain trust in the health care industry and reach out for more health care when they are in need, that is a great achievement.”

How do you feel your work on COPE impacts members?

**Paul Rupp, MS, LAT, ATC,
District Three Representative:**

“I hope my work on COPE will help educate our members about the NATA Code of Ethics and how to incorporate it into our daily practice. This, in turn, will protect the profession, each other and our patients.”

**Amber Melick, MS, ATC,
District Four Representative:**

“As a COPE member, I am passionate about educating and encouraging the NATA membership in upholding our professional values contained in the NATA Code of Ethics. The four principles of our Code of Ethics outline the key values of the NATA: primacy of the patient as our main duty; following federal, state and regulatory laws of the profession; ensuring quality care through education and training; and reducing conflicts of interest that may impact the patient. Professional acculturation of new NATA members must include ethics education.”

Tips for (Ethical) Success From COPE

“Adopt and adhere to the NATA Code of Ethics within your athletic training practice, lead by example and surround yourself with those who share similar values to you.”

-Robert Huggins, PhD, LAT, ATC, District One Representative

“Be familiar enough with the NATA Code of Ethics that it becomes internalized to guide your every action and behavior.”

-John Roslien, MS, LAT, ATC, District Five Representative

“Provide appropriate training. Ethical behavior should always be emphasized through training opportunities.”

-Amber Melick, MS, ATC, District Four Representative

“Think about how your patient will perceive your actions. As you palpate their injuries, and talk about their ailments, are you doing such to educate and explain what and where you are touching? And, are we truly protecting their confidentiality to the best of our ability? We want them to be comfortable with what we are doing and why.”

-Paul Rupp, MS, LAT, ATC, District Three Representative

NATA Committee on Professional Ethics: Who’s Who

Chair Suzanne Konz, PhD, ATC, CSCS	District Eight Matthew Quijano, MA, ATC	At Large Tim Kelly, MS, ATC
District One Robert Huggins, PhD, LAT, ATC	District Nine Hal Strough, PhD, LAT, ATC	At Large Kimberly Peer, EdD, ATC, FNATA
District Two Daniel J. Braut, MS, ATC	District Ten Vacant	At Large Mike Hopper, MS, LAT, ATC
District Three Paul Rupp, MS, LAT, ATC	At Large Jamie Musler, LPD, ATC	At Large James Hamburg, MS, LAT, ATC
District Four Amber Melick, MS, ATC	At Large William Garrett, DHSc, ATC	At Large Victoria Ketchum, ATC, PTA
District Five John Roslien, MS, LAT, AT	At Large Lana Loken, EdD, ATC	NATA Board of Directors Liaison Diane Sartanowicz, MS, LAT, ATC
District Six Cameron Hieb, MEd, LAT, ATC	At Large Christine Odell, PhD, ATC	
District Seven Dominic Di Manna, MEd, LAT, ATC	At Large R. Tyler Hamilton MS, ATC	