



Inside the Occupational Health Setting

These athletes play on concrete with big power tools

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I can hear the roar of another plane landing on the nearby runway and mechanics riveting and drilling just outside my office. Something about the sound runs chills down my spine. It is amazing to watch one of those planes soar into the sky; it never gets old. My kids think my new job is pretty cool. “My daddy works with the people who build those big planes in the sky,” my daughter tells people when they ask her where her daddy works. “He makes sure

they don't get hurt doing their job.” Hearing her say that never gets old.

I worked in the traditional athletic training setting for 15 years, first as an intern and then as an AT for a high school in McLean, Va. The high school position offered excellent athletic training experience because I had opportunity to meet with other ATs every two weeks to discuss issues and metrics, and we spent time reviewing evidence-based concepts and applications.

My team physician at the high school initially approached me about a physician extender position with his orthopedic clinic. He requested I organize and present a business proposal to add an AT position at his

clinic with six other orthopedic surgeons. I scoured the NATA website for physician extender information and athletic trainer return-on-investment data and added information about local advertising outreach. It must have gone well because I was hired following the presentation. The clinic gave me the opportunity to see and experience the business end of athletic training.

Although I enjoyed my years in the traditional athletic training setting, I started to experience burnout. I had an outstanding athletic director, great coworkers and a very supportive community, yet the long nights without seeing my three children or wife were taking a toll emotionally and physically. I wanted to stay in the sports

medicine field in which I had worked so hard to establish myself, but I needed a change.

I found postings on the NATA Career Center for a company called Work-Fit, LLC,

preventable care to 3rd shift employees. Once crew meetings begin, we check in with targeted crews to determine their status on projects, instruct them in pre-shift

entry. I walk out to my car with the AT mentality “maybe I could stay a little longer to get a little more done,” but now I have time to get home to meet my three kids at the bus stop everyday.

I crawl inside the wing of a 767 with a sealer and see how the awkward position they are positioned in for hours is causing them pain. I walk inside the plane to observe a mechanic and offer insight into why his shoulder is hurting while working above head.

I have found a great mix of experienced ATs and new graduates work in the industrial setting. The new grads are here to experience something different from the traditional role, and the experienced ATs are seeking a unique challenge that fits their career goals and lifestyle. Together we learn from each other along an uncharted course many of us have never experienced.

which was founded in 1979 by Ken Kopke, AT Ret. Work-Fit provides worksite solutions for industrial settings by employing ATs, fitness specialists and physical therapists. After two phone interviews, I flew out for a third interview. I was offered the job and have now been here for 1.5 years. I work eight hours a day, from 4:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at Boeing commercial airplane plant in Everett, Wash. with the 767 airplane program. The Everett Boeing plant alone employs 22 Work-Fit ATs responsible for the health care of the Boeing employees. The entire Work-Fit company employs more than 75 ATs throughout the United States at very different settings, including some of the largest production manufacturing and distribution companies in the world.

dynamic warm-ups or talk to them about what services we can provide. Each AT is responsible for a particular area of focus within each plane program. Following crew meetings I check in with managers at their desk, employees at their worksite, and work through scheduled employee appointments.

The employee worksite visits are the most exciting part of the day because I get to visit with a mechanic inside the “doghouse” or nose of a 767. I crawl inside the wing of a 767 with a sealer and see how the awkward position they are positioned in for hours is causing them pain. I walk inside the plane to observe a mechanic and offer insight into why his shoulder is hurting while working above head. I finish my day with safety council meetings, employee involvement meetings, executive level manager meetings, incident investigations, safety coordinator walk-throughs, job conditioning classes, with maybe a little time left over for data

By stepping into the occupational health area – specifically the industrial setting – I still get to work with athletes. These athletes work on some of the thickest concrete in the world, in confined spaces barely big enough to crawl through. They sometimes work above head for eight hours a day or are strapped on the top of the vertical fin of an airplane. Like ATs in traditional settings, we focus on prevention, helping Boeing employees reduce their risk of injury. Our customer is consistently asking for our metrics showing how we are helping them reduce their lost workday case rate.

The occupational health setting offers the opportunity for something new. It requires different hours and serves a different population. Working at Boeing has given me a whole new way to be challenged, and it gives me more time to see my family.

To learn more about working in the emerging settings, view the NATA CEPAT committee’s online resources at www.nata.org/CEPAT.

A TYPICAL DAY AT BOEING

I arrive at 4:30 a.m., and crew meetings begin at 5 a.m. As soon as I arrive, I’m providing