The Current Status and Future Direction of Post-Professional Graduate Athletic Training Education: A Delphi Study

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Abstract

A Delphi methodology was utilized which consisted of three rounds of surveys. The population consisted of two panels of experts, post-professional faculty and leaders in athletic training, based on the required and preferred additional criteria for each panel. A total of 23 experts completed round one which consisted of 37 Likert-scale statements. A total of 19 experts completed round two which consisted of 60 statements/questions. A total of 17 experts completed round three which consisted of 42 statements.

The experts agreed that professional education should be supported at the post-baccalaureate level and housed in a School of Allied Health Professions. They also agreed that there is a concern that professional students are being encouraged to attain a master's degree and accept a graduate position in a non-athletic training masters' degree. However, they were not able to reach consensus as to whether professional education should remain at the undergraduate level or move to the masters' level. In addition, the experts agreed that more post-professional masters' programs should be developed and that accreditation should be required of all post-professional educational programs. The experts also believe that all post-professional education should be optional. Although the experts agreed that if professional education moves to the masters' level, post-professional could evolve into PhD programs, the post-professional faculty were not able to reach consensus on this. The experts also agreed that a residency program should be started at different levels. However, the experts believe that all post-professional education should be optional and that it can help bring parity with other health care professions.

Significance of the Study

There is little research on post-professional athletic training education. The ECAE and the PCEE are looking at the development of new more post-professional graduate ATEPs. However, it is unknown if there is any consensus as to the need or direction for the future.

Limitations of the Study

1. The results are limited to the panel of experts and cannot be generalized to the entire athletic training education population.
2. It is assumed that the individuals on the panel are a general understanding of the needs of post-professional athletic training education.
3. Post-professional graduate ATEPs are currently evolving and the results may only be reflective of the perceptions at the time of the study. As more research is performed on post-professional education, the experts' opinions may change.

Methodology

• Delphi Method: survey experts to obtain a consensus of opinion
• Population: 2 panels
  1. PP AT Faculty
  2. Leaders in AT Profession
• Purposeful sampling based on the criteria:
  PP AT Faculty:
  • ATC w/terminal degree
  • Min of 5 yrs as faculty in PP ATEP
  • Faculty in PP ATEP or w/in last 2 yrs
  • Preferred criteria:
  • Experience w/ CAATE ATEPs
  • PP ATEP graduate
• Leaders in AT (LAT) Profession:
  • Participation & leadership at district & national levels
  • ATC civic volunteerism at district & national levels
  • Promote professionalism through national presentations, educational activities, & other activities that build AT awareness.
  • Contributions to AT Knowledge base through presentations and/or publications.
  • Contributions to development & growth of AT profession in new & unique settings
  • Preferred criteria:
  • Degree in health care profession in addition to AT.

Research Questions

1. What is the best model for AT education?
2. Which components of health care education models will best fit the future needs of advanced AT education?
3. What are the concerns with post-professional education at the current status?
4. What are the future needs for post-professional graduate ATEPs?

Data Collection

• The top 18 experts in each group were contacted.
• 25 experts gave consent & agreed to participate.
• 11 PP AT Faculty
• 14 leaders in AT Profession
• Two levels of agreement:
  • With other respondents (80% consensus)
  • With the statement:
    • Mean > 3.00 w/SD < 1.00 = consensus to agree
    • Mean < 2.00 w/SD < 1.00 = consensus to disagree
• Three rounds of surveys based on 6 constructs:
  • R1 = 37 statements
  • 11 PP and 12 LAT responded
  • 1 statement reached consensus
  • R2 = 60 statements
  • 8 PP and 11 LAT responded
  • 21 statements reached consensus
  • R3 = 42 statements
  • 8 PP and 9 LAT responded

Results

1. What is the best model for AT education?

   Experts disagreed that:
   • A post-professional masters’ AT program & AT residency programs should be categorized into PGY1 and PGY2.
   • Residency training should be required to practice.

   Experts agreed that:
   • AT students are being encouraged to diversify & attain a non-AT masters’ degree.
   • AT program directors, faculty, and ACS need to be better educated about PP AT programs to change the culture.
   • Professional AT students lack clinical maturity which can’t be remediated in practice.
   • A focused clinical experience is essential to meet the needs of society.
   • A focused clinical experience is essential to meet the needs of society.
   • Professional AT programs need to be developed.

   Conclusions

Overall, the athletic training profession needs to determine if professional education should move to the masters’ level. This decision will greatly impact post-professional education. The expert supports increasing the number of advanced master’s programs, developing residencies and specialty certifications. However, further discussion needs to occur about implementing these. The expert supports increasing the number of advanced master’s programs, developing residencies and specialty certifications. Further discussion needs to occur about implementing these.

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References