



Introduction

Certified Athletic Trainers (AT) are healthcare professionals that have earned a bachelors or masters degree from a college or university that has a Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE) accredited program. Upon earning the degree, prospective athletic trainers must then pass a Board of Certification exam in order to earn the credentials of AT. Upon certification they join the workforce in athletics, hospitals, clinics, and numerous other settings. Their primary job concern is in the safety and rehabilitation of active individuals.

Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) has one of the six CAATE accredited Athletic Training Education Programs (ATEP) in Oklahoma. It has been noticed that the graduating class size of the ATEP at SWOSU has been declining. In contrast, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009) suggests the employment for athletic trainers should grow by 37% over the next decade. With a growing job outlook, the question is raised as to how to recruit more students into the athletic training profession. Therefore, to improve recruiting efforts, the objective of this research was to establish a knowledge as to why people choose athletic training as a degree and career.

Aim of Study

- To determine the age and gender characteristics of students in ATEP.
- To determine what previous experiences lead students to become athletic trainers.
- To determine the number of students who chose athletic training as their first degree and who had previously earned a degree prior to entering into an ATEP.

Materials and Methods

This project was done to meet the requirements of ALHLT 3043 Health Statistics in Spring 2011.

The following steps were taken:

- Received approval from the SWOSU Protection of Human Subjects Committee.
- Conducted a survey using convenience sampling of 43 collegiate athletic training students at the Oklahoma Athletic Trainers Association (OATA) High School Day on the campus of Southwestern Oklahoma State University on February 12, 2011.
- Subjects were current athletic training students from all six CAATE accredited ATEP in Oklahoma including: East Central University, Oklahoma State University, Southern Nazarene University, Southwestern Oklahoma State University, University of Tulsa, and University of Central Oklahoma.
- Subjects completed the questions on the survey.
- Data was organized and analyzed using a Microsoft Excel® Spreadsheet.
- Data analysis was conducted utilizing Descriptive Statistics and Chi Square Testing.

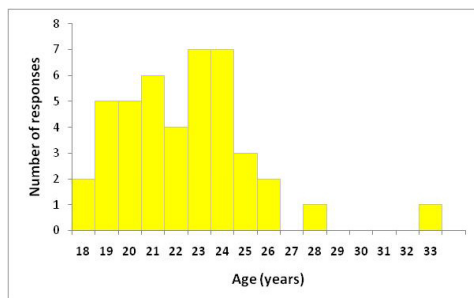


Figure 1. Histogram of subject age who completed the survey.

Results

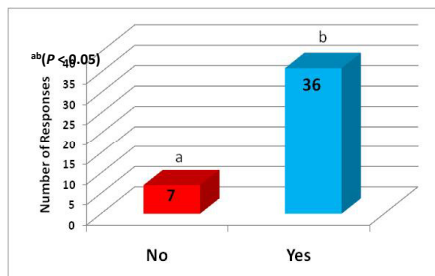


Figure 2. Number of subjects who played sports in high school.

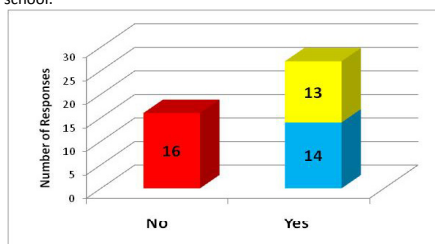


Figure 3. Number of subjects who attended an informative session on athletic training (Blue = In high school and Yellow = In college).

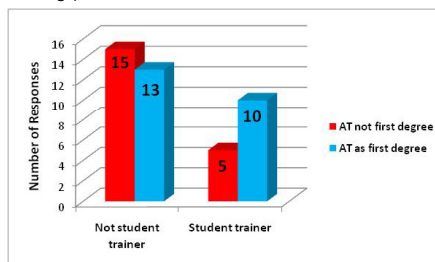


Figure 4. Number of subjects who assisted with high school athletics and did or did not choose athletic training as their first degree.

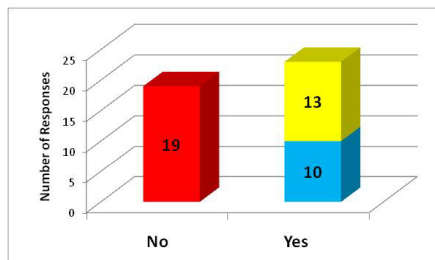


Figure 5. Number of subjects who were injured while playing a sport (Blue = worked with AT and Yellow = did not work with AT).

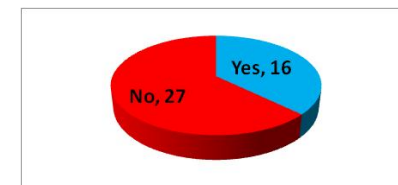


Figure 6. Number of subjects who chose athletic training as their first degree.

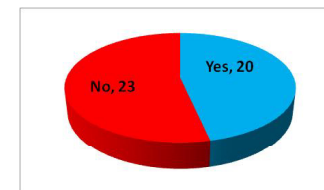


Figure 7. Number of subjects who had previously earned a degree prior to entering into an athletic training education program.

Conclusions

- Thirty of 43 students surveyed were female, and their ages ranged from 18 to 33 years (Figure 1). This suggests more ($P < 0.05$) females than males are enrolled in ATEP in Oklahoma.
- Results suggest primary influences for choosing an athletic training degree were participating in competitive sports (Figure 2) and attending an informative session on athletic training (Figure 3). We observed 13/14 respondents who attended an informative session in high school choose athletic training as their first degree, whereas only 2/13 who attended an informative session in college did so.
- Other potential influences include assisting high school athletics as a manager or student trainer (Figure 4), and working with a certified athletic trainer while injured (Figure 5). Overall 15/43 subjects assisted with high school athletics, and, of these, there was a tendency ($P = 0.20$) for more subject to choose athletic training as their first degree. While similar trends for first degree choice were not found, working with an AT while injured did provide exposure to the career.
- Minor influences include a relative working in the field of athletic training (4/43) and attending OATA High School Day (1/42) (Data not shown). However, based on current age, we estimate that only 18/43 would have had the opportunity to attend this event, which only has been offered since 2006.
- Overall, results suggest recruiting efforts could be enhanced by exposing students to the career opportunities offered by the athletic training profession prior to entering college or early in their college career. This is suggested by our data, because fewer students tended ($P < 0.10$) to choose athletic training as their first degree (Figure 6), and 20/43 students had already earned a previous degree prior to entering into an ATEP (Figure 7).

Literature Cited

- About athletic training. (2010, January 1). Retrieved on January 21, 2011 from <http://www.nata.org/athletic-training>.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. (2009, December 17). *Occupational outlook handbook athletic trainers, 2010-11 edition*. Retrieved April 1, 2011 from <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos294.htm#outlook>
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