

EFFICACY OF AN ATHLETIC TRAINING CLINICAL RESIDENCY PROGRAM IN DEVELOPING MASTERY OF ENTRY-LEVEL SKILLS IN POST-CERTIFICATION GRADUATE ATHLETIC TRAINING EDUCATION

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Objective: We evaluated the implementation of an Athletic Training Clinical Residency program in a Post-Certification Graduate Athletic Training Education Program (PC-GATEP). Clinical Residency programs incorporate diverse classroom, field, and clinical experiences while blending theoretical and individualized practical experiences through an Individual Clinical Education Plan (ICEP) to facilitate the development of autonomous clinicians. Athletic Training Clinical Residents are first year PC-GATEP students placed in clinical settings designed to facilitate mastery of entry-level clinical skills to provide more effective patient care. **Design and Setting:** We developed an ICEP for each student in the first year of a two-year PC-GATEP. Faculty assessed students' entry level clinical skills before and after the first semester of the Clinical Residency program using an extensive oral practical format (30 scenarios over six stations). Upon completion of the pre-tests, student performance weaknesses were addressed within the student's ICEP which incorporated remedial activities of specific coursework, additional clinical experience with an advanced practitioner, reflective clinical journaling, structured interviews for goal setting, and a clinical research project to improve clinical performance and ultimately patient care. **Subjects:** Participants included 3 female and 2 male (mean age=22.4±0.55yr) graduate research assistants enrolled in their first year of a PC-GATEP at an urban, research extensive university. All participants were BOC certified or eligible and were assigned ≥ 15 hr-week⁻¹ at a clinical site (high school) at the time of the investigation. **Measurements:** We developed an entry-level clinical skills assessment based on the 4th edition of the NATA competencies and proficiencies. Paired t-tests were used to compare pre- and post-test performance. **Results:** Participants significantly ($t_4=-8.806$, $p \leq 0.001$) improved 15.28% from the pre-test (mean score=76.96±5.6%) entry level clinical skills assessment to the post-test (mean score=90.84±2.49%) assessment. **Conclusions:** Within the limitations of our investigation, our findings suggest that further clinical education beyond the undergraduate level is necessary to refine and master entry-level clinical skills. The Clinical Residency program and its components demonstrated an effective approach to structuring and documenting progression toward an effective autonomous clinician. Our findings support the notion of obtaining a Masters degree in the profession through PC-GATEPs which provide structured clinical experiences, didactic content, additional time, and support of advanced practitioners needed to continue to refine and master entry-level clinical skills. We suggest further research is necessary to more clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of a Clinical Residency program in mastery of entry-level clinical skills and development of advanced clinical skills across a two-year PC-GATEP.

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