Calling on Athletic Trainers to Become Unintentional Injury Safety Advocates

According to the National Committee for Injury Prevention and Control, “Injury is probably the most under recognized major public health problem facing the nation today, and the study of injury represents unparalleled opportunities for reducing morbidity and mortality and for realizing significant savings in both financial and human terms—all in return for a relatively modest investment” (p. 1). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/default.htm) reports that the number of emergency department visits for injuries annually is at a whopping 43 million! With the summer months upon us and most children out on recess from school, injury prevention takes center stage.

My involvement as a member of the Delaware Coalition for Injury Prevention (http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dph/ems/injuryprevention.html) has strengthened my resolve not only to advocate for safety in my home state, but to spread the message nationwide. When I was first asked to become involved in the coalition 12 years ago, I did so a bit selfishly hoping I would see an avenue toward grant funding in support of my own research enterprise. Through the years I have come to realize that the coalition and its members are an important and vital part of keeping Delawareans safe. Athletic trainers have a unique skill set that fits nicely into the coalition’s mission, goals, and objectives. In fact, a primary domain of athletic training practice involves injury prevention.

My sense is that most (if not all) states have some semblance of an injury prevention aspect of state government, which creates a perfect opportunity for athletic trainers to become involved. Such involvement, for me at least, has created opportunities to spread the message about the role of athletic trainers as sports health care professionals, but it has also afforded me the chance to meet and hear from other health care professionals throughout the state who advocate for issues ranging from sexual assault to dog bites. In fact, our coalition is composed of eight “teams” that provide educational outreach and advocacy in the following areas: (1) dog bite injuries, (2) drowning injuries, (3) fall injuries, (4) fire-related injuries, (5) motor-vehicle related injuries, (6) poisoning, (7) traumatic brain injuries (I co-chair this team), and (8) individual and family violence injuries.

For me the learning curve was steep, but along the way I have come to realize the commitment
and passion that my fellow coalition members have for the health and welfare of their constituent groups and how open to input from other healthcare professionals they are. A common trait among athletic training professionals is our commitment to our athletes/patients/clients and the desire to make them safe, prevent injury, and treat them in the event of injury or harm. This is a trait that is well suited for involvement in such governmental organizations whose mission it is to provide leadership to reduce injury-related morbidity and mortality through injury prevention initiatives.

As a fellow athletic trainer and health care professional, I urge you to stand up and put your skills and talents to good use by getting involved in your state’s injury prevention programs!

**REFERENCE**


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