

9/8/2020

RE: Athletic Training Practice Act in Nebraska

Dear Credentialing Review Committee,

My name is Nathan A. Jacobson and I am a board certified Orthopaedic Surgeon with a sports medicine certification subspecialty, currently practicing in North Platte, Nebraska.

I would like to start off by saying that I fully support the amendments / updates the Nebraska State Athletic Trainers' Association has proposed. These updates are specific to the Nebraska Athletic Training Practice Act, expanding the definition of those they can treat, and more accurately defining the skill set of athletic trainers. I've had the pleasure of working with athletic trainers at all competition levels, from high school to the professional sports ranks, in California, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada and Nebraska. Through these interactions, I have also been exposed to athletic trainers from various other states through interactions between the medical staffs of the opposing team(s).

My chief experience with athletic trainers is in the classic sideline coverage / event coverage role. However, I've had a much more diverse and in-depth working relationship with athletic trainers when working in the Twin Cities of Minnesota. In this setting not only did the athletic trainers provide game / event coverage in the classical setting, but they were also an integral part of the clinical practice of primary sports medicine providers and orthopaedic surgeons. Additionally, the athletic trainers also worked closely with the rehab departments' physical therapists and occupational therapists.

I would like to see our certified athletic trainers in Nebraska gain the privileges and responsibilities that I have seen them capable of performing through my direct observation. In an office setting there are many roles that should be open to athletic trainers. This would not only improve patient care, but also provide an increased pool of highly skilled and talented professionals for our medical systems to take advantage of. This is especially important during our current COVID-19 crisis, where medical resources are thin and manpower shortages are critical.

In my experience, athletic trainers performing an initial intake of a new patient in the clinical setting can provide a much more in-depth musculoskeletal history of present illness as they know the musculoskeletal system better than a medical assistant or nurse (RN or LPN). This allows them to focus in on the pathology much quicker and provide me more directed information upon entering the exam room. Utilizing their musculoskeletal knowledge and standing orders for ordering appropriate x-rays for their supervising physician should be one of the many privileges extended to athletic trainers in Nebraska. An athletic trainers' rehabilitation knowledge and training gives them a unique skill set, allowing them to provide the initial patient education for a home exercise / rehab program at the conclusion of the office visit. I cannot stress enough the

Locations

**Great Plains Health
General Surgery**
516 West Leota St.
North Platte, NE 69101
O 308.568.3700
F 308.534.3813

**Great Plains Health
Orthopaedics**
215 McNeel Lane
North Platte, NE 69101
O 308.568.3800
F 308.534.6662

**Great Plains Health
Psychiatric Services**
601 West Leota St., Suite 500
North Platte, NE 69101
O 308.568.7251
F 308.568.7261

**Great Plains Health
Wound Healing Center**
601 West Leota St.
North Platte, NE 69101
O 308.568.8648
F 308.568.8649

North Platte Health Pavilion

611 W. Francis St.
North Platte, NE 69101

**Great Plains Health
Heart & Vascular Center
Suite 150**
O 308.568.8577
F 308.568.8579

**Great Plains Health
Internal Medicine
Suite 160**
O 308.568.3500
F 308.568.3739

**Great Plains Health
Endocrinology
Infectious Disease
Nephrology
Neurosciences
Pain Management
Pediatrics
Pulmonology
Spine Center
Urology
Suite 200**
O 308.568.3500
F 308.568.3509

importance of these home exercise programs and the patient education athletic trainers offer. I work on the western side of the state and my patient population will travel sometimes 200 miles one way for their orthopaedic evaluation, as patients from South Dakota, Kansas and Wyoming come to North Platte for medical care. These people commonly live in areas where physical therapy services are not possible or are only viable after an extended travel / drive time. Consequently, some patients do not get the acuity of formal therapy that I would desire, and initiation of therapy is commonly delayed for weeks after it is prescribed. Having an athletic trainer in the office would allow for these patients to be instructed before they leave my office to make sure these treatments / interventions are immediately begun. This upfront patient education / training can have a profound effect on the patient's recovery and compliance.

Due to the musculoskeletal injury and treatment background that athletic trainers have, they are an instant fit in the clinic setting especially with primary care sports medicine, physical medicine and rehabilitation, and orthopaedic surgery specialties, to name a few. The presence of athletic trainers in the clinic would increase the musculoskeletal knowledge base and physical exam skills of many non-specialty / general medical providers. Musculoskeletal training is a known weakness of medical education programs / training in the United States, and athletic trainers could play a support role in bolstering this skill set. Lastly, proper examination, injury differentiation and diagnosis skills could also allow for conservation of medical expenditures / cost savings for Nebraskans. Not everyone needs an MRI as part of their initial musculoskeletal work-up.

Upon starting my practice in Nebraska, I have continually pushed at my institution to expand the athletic training services. We want to provide access to the athletic trainer skill set on a day-to-day basis in my office, and not just provide coordinated and robust athletic training services for our region's teams and sporting events. There is no question that having someone with an athletic trainer's education level would increase my productivity in the office as well as facilitate improved patient care. There is peer reviewed research that illustrates this point very well.

The spectrum of patients that should fall under the practice guidelines for athletic trainers should also be addressed. "Athletic injuries" does not adequately define my practice as a sports medicine specialist or the types of patients I treat daily. The emphasis should be on musculoskeletal injuries and types of injuries, not a specific patient population. For example,

1. A high school football player who dislocates their shoulder and sustained a labral tear management is very similar, if not identical, to the 45-year-old who dislocated their shoulder in a car accident. Just because the second patient did not sustain their injury on an athletic field does not mean that the athletic trainer is not fully qualified to assess and treat them.
2. A high school basketball player falls to the ground after their knee buckles after contact when landing from a shot and tears their ACL. This is not different from a rancher who jumps down off his truck bed and sustains a valgus injury to his knee and suffers an ACL tear.

Locations

**Great Plains Health
General Surgery**
516 West Leota St.
North Platte, NE 69101
O 308.568.3700
F 308.534.3813

**Great Plains Health
Orthopaedics**
215 McNeel Lane
North Platte, NE 69101
O 308.568.3800
F 308.534.6662

**Great Plains Health
Psychiatric Services**
601 West Leota St., Suite 500
North Platte, NE 69101
O 308.568.7251
F 308.568.7261

**Great Plains Health
Wound Healing Center**
601 West Leota St.
North Platte, NE 69101
O 308.568.8648
F 308.568.8649

North Platte Health Pavilion

611 W. Francis St.
North Platte, NE 69101

**Great Plains Health
Heart & Vascular Center
Suite 150**
O 308.568.8577
F 308.568.8579

**Great Plains Health
Internal Medicine
Suite 160**
O 308.568.3500
F 308.568.3739

**Great Plains Health
Endocrinology
Infectious Disease
Nephrology
Neurosciences
Pain Management
Pediatrics
Pulmonology
Spine Center
Urology
Suite 200**
O 308.568.3500
F 308.568.3509

3. A soccer player is slide tacked, resulting in an ankle fracture is not that different from the rancher who gets kicked by a steer also resulting in an ankle fracture.
4. A football player who sustains an axial load to their neck from a collision and presents with localized pain, is not significantly different from an individual coming off their bicycle in a similar fashion with the same injury mechanism.
5. A runner who develops shin splints and patellar tendonitis could be a cross country or track star but could also be the middle-aged man or woman trying to get into better shape and lose weight. I would argue both are athletes and could benefit from evaluation and treatment from an athletic trainer.
6. A firefighter who develops lateral epicondylitis / tennis elbow. These are "athletic injuries." I consider vocations such as the military, law enforcement and firefighters as vocational athletes due to the physical demands of their jobs/professions and their need for more of an "athlete approach" to their injury management and job performance.

The injuries that athletic trainers routinely see on the competition field, and routinely treat, are seen in numerous other situations across the full spectrum of ages. Their knowledge and skill set can easily be applied all of these musculoskeletal injuries. Athletic trainers are musculoskeletal specialists, with the full breadth of these injuries coming under their umbrella of expertise and training. Athletic Trainers should be allowed to see the full spectrum of patient types who have sustained some kind of musculoskeletal injury or concussion.

I should not leave out concussions as this is another injury / condition that is in the forefront of the public mind and press/media. Athletic trainers are the primary individuals / profession that performs the initial evaluation on the sidelines and directs the progressive return to play following the appropriate guidelines, with/without neurocognitive testing results under the direction of their supervision physician.

Thank you for your time and effort on this very important issue that has the potential to improve the care of all Nebraskans.



Nathan A. Jacobson, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgery and Sports Medicine
Great Plains Health
North Platte, NE 69101

Locations

**Great Plains Health
General Surgery**
516 West Leota St.
North Platte, NE 69101
O 308.568.3700
F 308.534.3813

**Great Plains Health
Orthopaedics**
215 McNeel Lane
North Platte, NE 69101
O 308.568.3800
F 308.534.6662

**Great Plains Health
Psychiatric Services**
601 West Leota St., Suite 500
North Platte, NE 69101
O 308.568.7251
F 308.568.7261

**Great Plains Health
Wound Healing Center**
601 West Leota St.
North Platte, NE 69101
O 308.568.8648
F 308.568.8649

North Platte Health Pavilion

611 W. Francis St.
North Platte, NE 69101

**Great Plains Health
Heart & Vascular Center
Suite 150**
O 308.568.8577
F 308.568.8579

**Great Plains Health
Internal Medicine
Suite 160**
O 308.568.3500
F 308.568.3739

**Great Plains Health
Endocrinology
Infectious Disease
Nephrology
Neurosciences
Pain Management
Pediatrics
Pulmonology
Spine Center
Urology
Suite 200**
O 308.568.3500
F 308.568.3509