
THE VALUE-ADDED ROLE OF ATHLETIC TRAINERS IN THE PHYSICIAN PRACTICE SETTING

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MEET THE PRESENTER



- Athletic Trainers in the Physician Practice Society
 - Founding Board Member
 - Secretary
 - Public Relations Committee Liaison
- No Financial Disclosures

ATPPS
Athletic Trainers in the
PHYSICIAN PRACTICE SOCIETY

OBJECTIVES

- Discuss the duties and responsibilities an athletic trainer can fulfill within your practice
- Outline scenarios where athletic trainers can add both direct and indirect value
- Present objective data demonstrating how athletic trainers can positively affect metrics such as patient satisfaction and clinic efficiency within your practice

WHAT IS AN ATHLETIC TRAINER?

- Nationally-certified licensed healthcare professional
- Trained in the prevention, evaluation, rehabilitation, and treatment of orthopedic injuries
- Over 85% have a master's degree
- Many have supplemental certifications, residency training and/or an orthopedic specialty certification



RESPONSIBILITIES ACROSS CLINICAL STAFF

- What is the practice staffing model?
 - AT, MA, PA, NP, RN?
- What are the expectations of staff?
 - Providers
 - Administrators
- Barriers or Limitations to Practice
 - State Practice Act, Other Clinical Staff, Uncertainty of AT Skill Set



IDENTIFYING ROLES – PROVIDING VALUE

Billable Providers See Billable Patients

- Optimize Clinic Efficiency
- Optimize Patient Flow

Clinic Patient Care

- MA and ATC work at top of scope of practice
- PA can work autonomously

Working at Top of Scope

- Enhances staff competency
- Creates staff engagement

CMS 2021 PHYSICIAN FEE SCHEDULE

How does CMS 2021
Physician Fee Schedule
Support Using ATs?

No longer CMS
requirement on who
documents HPI and PE
(decreases admin
burden)

Provider responsibility:
Document risk or time

ROLE DELINEATION ACROSS CLINICAL STAFF

MEDICAL ASSISTANT

- Note patient history and personal information
- Measure vital signs like blood pressure
- Update patient details in medical records
- Help doctors with patient exams
- Change sutures, dressings: Post-op care
- Give patients injections IM or medications per doctor orders (as permitted by state law)
- Order entry per MD Protocol
- Prep blood samples for lab tests
- Sterilize medical equipment
- Schedule patient appointments

ATHLETIC TRAINER

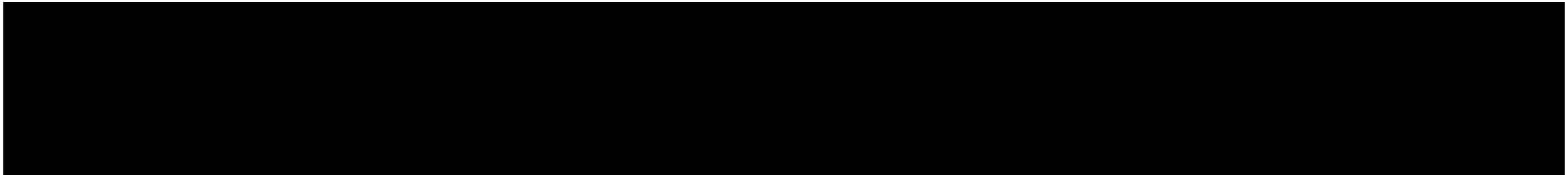
- Perform comprehensive medical history (HPI)
- Perform physical examination
- Provide clinical diagnosis
- Document for each patient encounter
- Order diagnostic studies or other referrals Per MD protocol
- Change sutures, dressings: Post-op care, see patients in Global period (Medicare)
- Perform patient educational responsibilities
- Provide Patient Rehab Instructions
- Administer patient injections or medications per doctor orders (as permitted by state law)
- Assist in surgery

ADVANCED PRACTICE PROVIDER

- Perform patient exams
- Diagnose injuries/illnesses
- Order and interpret laboratory tests and X-rays
- Advise patients on preventative care and optimal health practices
- Pre- and Post-op care and seeing patients in global period
- Administer patient injections or medications
- Assist in surgery
- Develop and manage treatment plans
- Prescribe medications
- Round of inpatients



CLINIC RESPONSIBILITIES



CARE DURING THE GLOBAL PERIOD

Pre- and Post-operative Care

- AT to see patients during the global period
- Assure provider is on site
- APP can see billable visits

DATA TO SUPPORT ATS IN PHYSICIAN PRACTICE

TOTALS	JK PRE	JK POST	JK TOTAL	MD NPV	MD FU	MD INJ	MD P/P	MD TOTAL	MD BILL
9/1/21-12/31/21	118	100	218	35	51	66	55	207	152
1/1/22-4/30/22	134	71	205	41	44	45	63	193	130
5/1/22-8/31/22	93	78	171	43	40	30	48	161	113
9/1/22-12/31/22	113	99	212	66	37	45	48	196	148
1/1/23-4/30/23	100	82	182	40	23	31	77	171	94
TOTAL	558	430	988	225	195	217	291	928	637

DATA TO SUPPORT ATS IN THE PHYSICIAN PRACTICE

- 12-month period, 2 PCSM Physicians, 6 months each with AT and MA
- Statistically significant increases in patient volume, charges and collections
- Pts/Day: 18-22%
- Collections: 40% avg

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SPORTS HEALTH

[Primary Care]

Comparison of the Effect of Medical Assistants Versus Certified Athletic Trainers on Patient Volumes and Revenue Generation in a Sports Medicine Practice

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Megan E. Himes, MEd, ATC, OTC,§ and Brandon A. Mines, MD‡

DATA TO SUPPORT ATS IN THE PHYSICIAN PRACTICE

- Overall Satisfaction: 9/10
- Clinical Skills: 8/10
- Quality of Life Improved: 8.5/10

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Physician Satisfaction With Residency-Trained Athletic Trainers as Physician Extenders

Forrest Quinn Pecha, MS, ATC, LAT, OTC, CSCS and Lucas A. Bahnmaier, MS, ATC, LAT, OTC • St. Luke's Sports Medicine; Mary L. Hasty, MBA, ATC • DJO Global; Joseph J. Greene, MS, ATC, LAT • University of Wisconsin Health

DATA TO SUPPORT ATS IN THE PHYSICIAN PRACTICE

- 2 PCSM Providers
- Physician A
 - 25% increase in Pt Throughput
 - 3.23 RVU increase/half day
- Physician B
 - 21% increase in Pt Throughput
 - 4.3 RVU increase/full day

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SPORTS HEALTH

[Athletic Training]

Patient Throughput in a Sports Medicine Clinic With the Implementation of an Athletic Trainer: A Retrospective Analysis

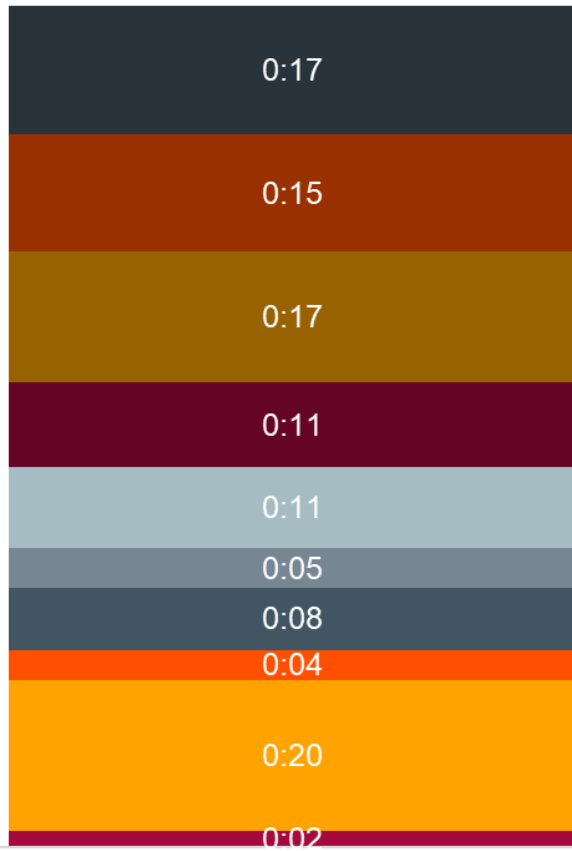
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IHQSE TIME STUDY

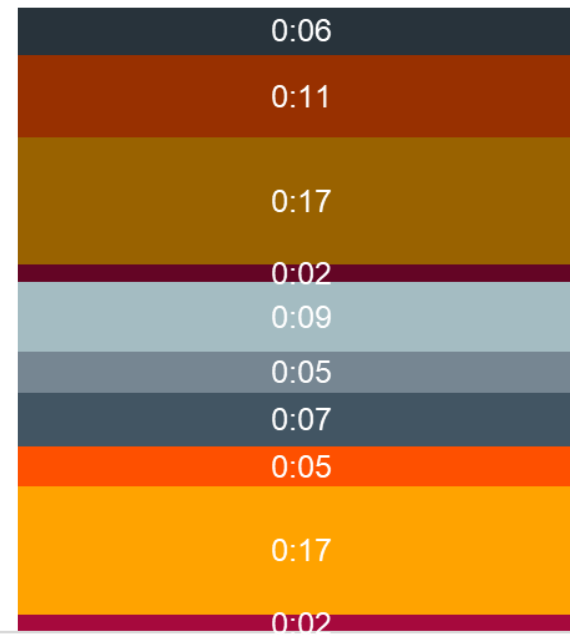
Initial and follow-up studies were conducted when athletic trainers were added to the following practices:

- Hand
- Joint Reconstruction

CLINIC FLOW PROCESS STEPS - HAND CLINIC



May 2015

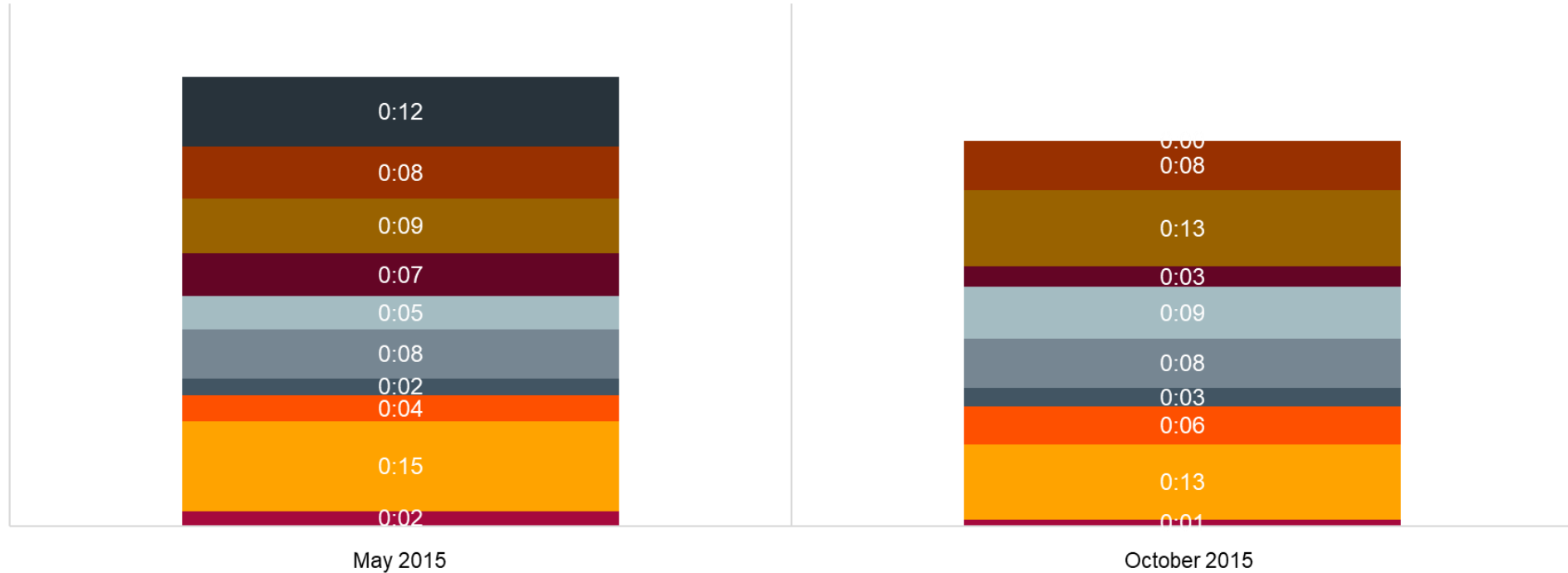


October 2015

- 1. Avg. of Check in Process
- 3. Avg. of Intake process
- 5. Avg. of Imaging time
- 7. Avg. of Provider 1 Encounter
- 9. Avg. of Primary Provider Encounter

- 2. Avg. of Pt wait to be roomed
- 4. Avg. of Wait for imaging
- 6. Avg. of Pt. Wait for Provider 1
- 8. Avg. of Pt. Wait for Primary Provider
- 10. Avg. of Pt. wait to leave (add. Services)

CLINIC FLOW PROCESS STEPS – ADULT RECONSTRUCTION



- 1. Avg. of Check in Process
- 3. Avg. of Intake process
- 5. Avg. of Imaging time
- 7. Avg. of Provider 1 Encounter
- 9. Avg. of Primary Provider Encounter

- 2. Avg. of Pt wait to be roomed
- 4. Avg. of Wait for imaging
- 6. Avg. of Pt. Wait for Provider 1
- 8. Avg. of Pt. Wait for Primary Provider
- 10. Avg. of Pt. wait to leave (add. Services)

IHQSE TIME STUDY

Notable improvements since integrating athletic trainers into the clinic included:

Hand

Primary Provider time in room: 29% decrease
Patient wait time to leave clinic: 63% decrease

Joint

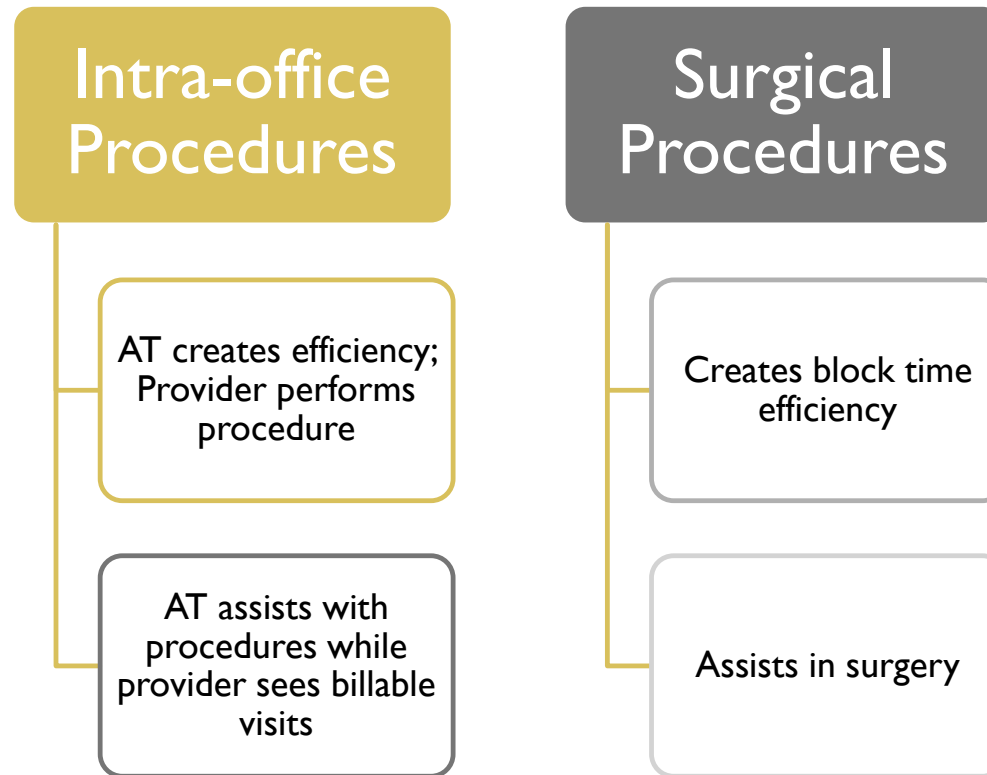
Provider 1 encounter time: 54% decrease
Patient wait time to leave clinic: 100% decrease (12 min)



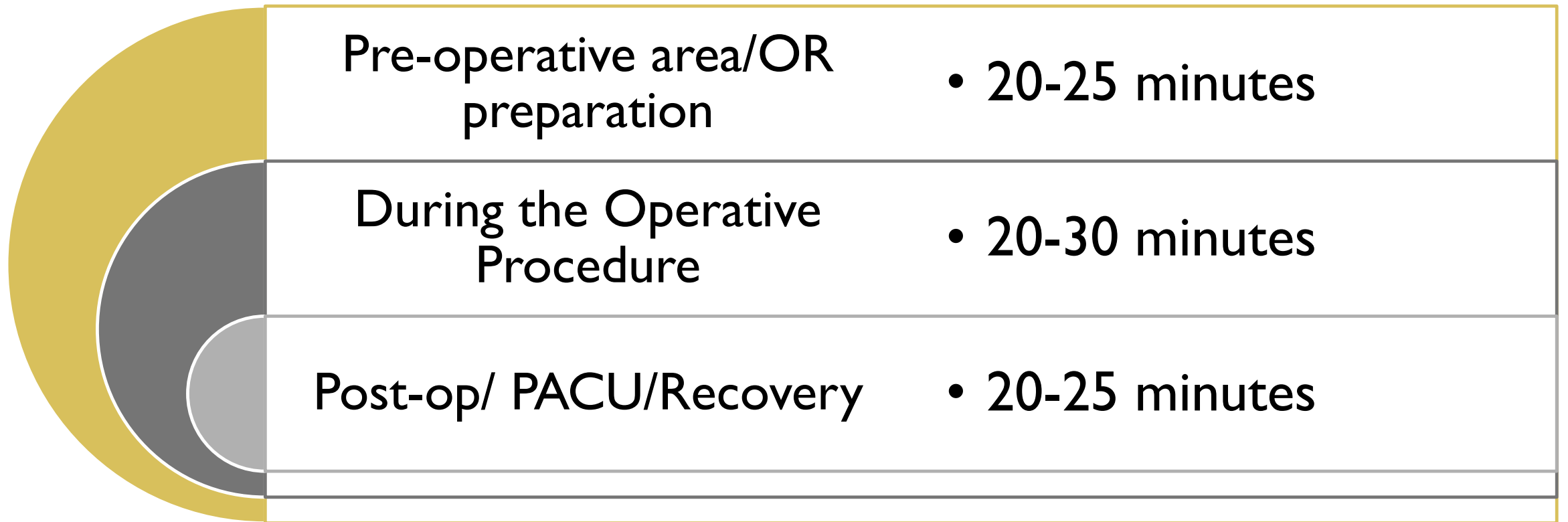
PERI-PROCEDURAL RESPONSIBILITIES



PROCEDURAL CARE



PERI-OPERATIVE CARE



60-80 minutes of non-billable time spent with **each patient and family** from intake to discharge

IMPACT ON INDIRECT REVENUE



Athletic trainers performing non-billable provider tasks enables the provider to proceed with additional billable visits/surgeries

Translates to increased patient satisfaction

Decreased call volume and call abandonment rates

Consistency created by the athletic trainer increases efficiency and revenue

IMPACT ON DIRECT REVENUE



When an athletic trainer assists a provider in performing a surgical procedure and provides more than just ancillary services, the athletic trainer may be eligible for payment as assistant-to-surgery services

AS modifier added to the procedure's CPT code

Payment at 80% of the lesser of the actual charge or 85% of the 16% that a physician assisting is paid under the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule

Consult facility's insurance coordinator to determine

- Appropriate billing codes and modifiers
- Whether specific language is written into the facility's contracts to bill for athletic trainers as assistants
- Types of patients, payors, and procedures where athletic training services can be billed in the operating room

DOCUMENTATION



**Athletic Trainers
Value in**

Athletic trainers (ATs) are routinely employed in hospitals, clinics, and in sports practices. Physicians and practice managers say ATs working in these settings provide patient satisfaction. They move patients more effectively and efficiently through the system in the same period of time, physicians are able to improve patient

Typical Daily Duties of an AT in a physician office:

- Perform assessments and evaluations
- Organize physician notes and radiographic studies
- Guide patients through the physical exam and post-appointment processes.
- Liaison between physician and patient
- Present final case reviews to physicians
- Casting, splinting and DME/brace fitting
- Perform therapeutic exercise
- Administer gait training
- Instruct in home exercise programs
- Assist with in-office procedures
- Order and interpret radiographs
- Document in electronic medical record
- Assist operating room

"Having an AT in my office has been a tremendous asset and has resulted in happier patients, greater productivity and better patient care. They understand the importance of getting my patients back on their feet in a safe, expeditious manner." —William Urban, MD Division Chief SUNY Downstate

"Athletic trainers are one of the only professionals who can take a patient from the second they get hurt through the entire process successfully." —Aaron Hajart, MS, ATC, Administrator, Division of Sports Medicine, Rutgers New Jersey School of Medicine

Contact Us

<http://www.nata.org/athletic-training/job-settings>

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"ATs have a unique skill set as clinicians and patient educators, and they can efficiently and offer services."

Advantages of ATs

- **Patient satisfaction** – ATs have a unique skill set as clinicians and patient educators, and they can efficiently and offer services.
- **Clinical efficiency** – ATs have a unique skill set as clinicians and patient educators, and they can efficiently and offer services.
- **Physician Satisfaction** – ATs have a unique skill set as clinicians and patient educators, and they can efficiently and offer services.
- **Revenue** – ATs have a unique skill set as clinicians and patient educators, and they can efficiently and offer services.

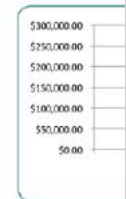


Figure 3. Total net revenue for a physician extender.

1 NATA FP 6/16

Athletic Trainers in the Physician Practice A Business Case

Pecha FQ, Kitano J, Nicoletto TS, Gr...

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Appendix 1: Athletic Training Residency Programs

Handout 1: Integrating Athletic Trainers in the Orthopaedic Practice
A reference for the Athletic Trainer on how to find
Acknowledgements



PHYSICIAN PRACTICE VALUE

Create
NATA Committee on

Physician Practice Value Model | October 2017

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

The Financial Impact of an Athletic Trainer Working as a Physician Extender in Orthopedic Practice

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The provision of care and business of musculoskeletal medicine have evolved significantly over the last two decades. It has become ever more important that those who are leading musculoskeletal medicine practices evolve with the changing healthcare landscape and find new ways to provide higher quality and more cost-effective care. To meet these new challenges, many orthopedic physicians are choosing to hire athletic trainers as a part of their office staff. Athletic trainers provide value to a medical practice through their skills in triage, taking patient histories, performing musculoskeletal evaluations, providing instruction on exercise prescription, rehabilitation, and general patient education. If a practice can become more efficient by narrowing staff to a single ancillary provider that encompasses several skills at a high level, this is where patient throughput and patient satisfaction scores can be improved by the athletic trainer as a physician extender.

KEY WORDS: Athletic trainers; physician extender; patient throughput; patient satisfaction; cost-effective care.

Editor's Note: Even though this is an article about an orthopedic practice, practices of all specialties can benefit from this analysis.

ATHLETIC TRAINERS AS PHYSICIAN EXTENDERS

Athletic trainers (ATs) are routinely employed in hospitals and clinics including orthopedic, family, pediatric, psychiatry, and sports medicine settings. ATs are highly educated healthcare specialists with an understanding of musculoskeletal injuries and have a unique ability to treat and manage the care of athletes and the active population. Clinically they assist physicians in effective patient flow through the appointment, evaluation, and treatment process. Utilizing an AT's unique skill set, physicians are able to increase patient throughput, by providing quality services to more patients in the same period of time, thus increasing clinic revenue. Studies have shown increases in patient throughput of between 15% and 30% when ATs are used in the physician extender capacity (Table 1).¹⁻⁴

PROFESSIONAL COMPETITION


ATs must possess strong clinical examination skills in order to accurately diagnose and effectively treat their patients, as defined in the educational competency of Clinical Examination and Diagnosis (CE). The development of these skills requires a thorough understanding of anatomy, physiology, and biomechanics. ATs must also apply clinical reasoning skills throughout the physical examination process in order to assimilate data, select the appropriate assessment tests, and formulate a differential diagnosis.⁵ Thus ATs' knowledge and skills in musculoskeletal medicine make them a unique professional to assist in an orthopedic-based clinic. Midlevel providers (physician assistants [PAs] and nurse practitioners [NPs]) have a broad-based education throughout healthcare, but have limited training in musculoskeletal medicine.⁶ They can work in an autonomous

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SUMMARY

- 
- Athletic trainers possess a wide skill set appropriate for the physician practice

- 
- Ample research objectively demonstrates that athletic trainers add value and revenue to the physician practice

- 
- Athletic trainers can play a significant role in advancing your physician practice
 - Patient Satisfaction
 - Patient Access/Throughput
 - Clinical Documentation (2021 CMS Fee Schedule Changes)

THANK YOU

- Jennifer Kitano MS, LAT, ATC, BCS-O
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- Additional Resources Available
 - <https://atpps.org/publications-research-and-documents/>



THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY