Characterizing Psychological Management Practices of College and University Athletic Trainers in Orange, California

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the psychological management practices of athletic trainers in California at the college and university setting. This research included 16 questions with skip logic and 24 answers in an attempt to develop a written psychological management plan in place at their institution while 28% (14/50) of ATs were unsure. The results found that more ATs reported having Catastrophic Incident Guidelines in place for homicide, suicide, and permanent disability cases (56%, 28/50) either instead of or in conjunction with a written psychological management plan. The ATs who reported having a written psychological management plan in place stated that their protocols included referral (91%, 11/12), emergencies (100%, 12/12), and prevention strategies (87%, 11/12). Furthermore, only 36% (13/50) of ATs reported that psychological screenings conducted by physicians were included in PPEs as prevention. Most ATs have encountered or will encounter psychological concerns while working in the college or university settings. Among the common psychological concerns outlined by the NATA, depression, ADHD, and eating disorders were found to be the most frequently seen. This research found that a majority of ATs are somewhat confident in their recognition of psychological concerns, but show greater levels of full confidence with the intervention of a concerned. The most common psychological concern encountered in the college or university setting was depression (86%, 43/50), followed by ADHD (82%, 41/50) and anxiety disorders (80%, 40/50) (Figure 2). In the recognition of psychological concerns, 76% (38/50) of ATs reported feeling somewhat confident while only 8% (4/50) reported full confidence (Figure 3). Contrarily, a larger percentage of ATs reported feeling catastrophic incident guidelines for cases including homicide, suicide, and permanent disability in their location’s policies and procedures. Although the NATA highly recommends that a physician screening for psychological concerns be included in the PPEs, we found that a majority of ATs only required a physical examination. It was found that most ATs required their education on psychological concerns through the California Board of Certification (BOC) continuing education units, the NATA consensus statement, and completion of competencies through an accredited program. Though our study added in characterizing the psychological management practices of college and university ATs, further research is needed for more in depth and qualitative data on the adherence levels of ATs to the NATA guidelines regarding the recognition and management of psychological concerns.

Conclusions

Most ATs have encountered or will encounter psychological concerns while working in the college or university settings. Among the common psychological concerns outlined by the NATA, depression, ADHD, and eating disorders were found to be the most frequently seen. This research found that a majority of ATs are somewhat confident in their recognition of psychological concerns, but show greater levels of full confidence with the intervention of a concerned. The most common psychological concern encountered in the college or university setting was depression (86%, 43/50), followed by ADHD (82%, 41/50) and anxiety disorders (80%, 40/50) (Figure 2). In the recognition of psychological concerns, 76% (38/50) of ATs reported feeling somewhat confident while only 8% (4/50) reported full confidence (Figure 3). Contrarily, a larger percentage of ATs reported feeling catastrophic incident guidelines for cases including homicide, suicide, and permanent disability in their location’s policies and procedures. Although the NATA highly recommends that a physician screening for psychological concerns be included in the PPEs, we found that a majority of ATs only required a physical examination. It was found that most ATs required their education on psychological concerns through the California Board of Certification (BOC) continuing education units, the NATA consensus statement, and completion of competencies through an accredited program. Though our study added in characterizing the psychological management practices of college and university ATs, further research is needed for more in depth and qualitative data on the adherence levels of ATs to the NATA guidelines regarding the recognition and management of psychological concerns.

References