

NATA Sees Future in Updated Strategic Plan

Eve Becker-Doyle

The National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) recently revisited its 2-year-old strategic plan to be sure that it's up to date and that it properly reflects the direction of the association. The NATA board of directors and representatives from key committees and staff met at the St. Louis convention in June to assess our progress and plan for the future.

The plan, with some minor revisions, calls for the NATA to continue to focus its efforts on the 4 strategic directions originally identified in 2001:

- Enhancing professional stature
- Increasing members' personal and professional satisfaction
- Strengthening credibility and visibility
- Ensuring financial stability

Enhancing professional stature means strengthening NATA's political connections and inviting strategic collaborations with related organizations. This strategy is intended to boost our presence and standing in the sports medicine community.

A key accomplishment is the formation of the Inter-Association Task Force on Exertional Heat Illnesses and the resulting consensus statement. The NATA took the lead on this important project by developing and chairing the task force and coordinating the creation of the final document.

This initiative allowed the NATA to collaborate and correspond with prestigious health and medical organizations—among them, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Sports Medicine, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—thus maximizing our position in the health care community.

Increasing members' personal and professional satisfaction involves the NATA working on behalf of certified athletic trainers (ATCs) to promote, advance, and improve both the profession as a whole and the lives of its participants. One way we are striving to enhance that satisfaction is by encouraging our members to be involved in, and to feel a part of, the NATA. Another way is by encouraging them to seek community and work-based avenues, which will ensure they are respected and valued by those around them, such as employers, parents, and legislators. Also, we know maintaining a work-life balance is imperative for our members to experience satisfying and fulfilling lives.

Our last two Johnson & Johnson keynote speakers have been selected with this life-balance objective in mind. The talented and vivacious author and talk show host Bertice Berry, PhD, delivered an outstanding address in Dallas, reminding us that caregivers need to take time for themselves and to receive as well as give care.

Beck Weathers, MD, delivered a powerful message in St. Louis. He learned the hard way to put first the things that matter most in life. Although that's easier said than done for all of us, the NATA is undertaking initiatives to help make the lives of our members more manageable and rewarding.

The Women in Athletic Training Committee has focused on quality-of-life issues, which affect all of our members—men and women alike. The committee's Web page lists a number of life-balancing resources. *NATA News* articles and convention workshops have been offered on time and stress management. This area will continue to be a challenge for our members, and we'll continue our efforts to address it.

Strengthening credibility and visibility is critical because educating the public about ATCs and the importance of the work we accomplish is a way to gain the recognition we're due. Taking an evidence-based approach to show our worth will help us achieve this.

We've had a good record of success with public-relations initiatives, such as National Athletic Training Month, that help the public to understand the role ATCs play on the athletic health care team. The NATA has garnered more press coverage in the past year than ever before from the heat-illness position and consensus statements, from Ariko Iso becoming the first woman ATC to be employed full time in the NFL, and from other public-relations activities.

We recognize that research and data bolster credibility by demonstrating the benefits of the care provided by ATCs. A good example is the study the NATA funded on time-loss and nontime-loss injuries completed last year. The data were procured to further augment and strengthen the "Recommendations and Guidelines for Appropriate Medical Coverage of Intercollegiate Athletics," and the document was revised accordingly to incorporate the findings.

Ensuring financial stability simply states what we already know—without dough, it's no go. "Show me the money" isn't

what we're all about, but realistically the NATA needs funding to be able to undertake the initiatives just described. These endeavors help promote the profession of athletic training and the long-term interests of ATCs.

Membership dues provide a viable source of income for the association, as do convention registration and exhibit-booth fees. We're always searching for ways to increase our non-dues revenue. Corporate sponsorships and rental of our unused office space are examples of non-dues revenue, as are programs such as the placement vacancy notice, which, in an enhanced format, will generate funds from employer fees starting in October.

The NATA leadership believes the strategic plan will keep us on track for our future course. The plan is deliberately broad in scope, allowing the leadership to be both flexible in maximizing opportunities and creative in delivering valued services to an increasingly diverse membership. Join us in taking this association to the next level of success with your individual participation in state, district, and national programs that strengthen the profession.

Editor's Note: Eve Becker-Doyle, CAE, is the Executive Director of the National Athletic Trainers' Association. If you want to know more about the NATA's strategic plan, go to www.nata.org, where you can download the document in its entirety.