

## New Section in *JAT*: Evidence-Based Practice

Jennifer M. Hootman

*Too much literature, not enough time.* To stay current with advances in the field, it is estimated that health care professionals would have to read 19 journal articles per day every day of the year.<sup>1</sup> For most certified athletic trainers, this is an impossible task. Developing strategies to assist clinicians to integrate medical research findings into their clinical decision making is an important goal. Beginning with this issue, the *Journal of Athletic Training (JAT)* will be attempting to provide such help in the new “Evidence-Based Practice” section, which uses a real clinical problem as the basis for choosing topics to review.

Evidence-based medicine and associated terms, such as evidence-based practice and best practices, have become the new “catch phrases” in health care. Subsequently, many medical and allied health journals have added special sections to report summaries of published research and commentary relevant to their audiences. These summaries serve as a method of describing the results of currently available literature in a concise and digestible form and providing clinicians with key messages they can apply to their clinical practice.

To complement the initiation of this section, this issue of *JAT* also introduces the concept of evidence-based medicine (EBM) for the athletic training clinician with the article by Steves and Hootman.<sup>2</sup> Future issues of *JAT* will include articles on related topics, such as applying EBM in your clinical practice, descriptions and methodologic issues related to different types of EBM studies, and sources of currently available systematic reviews relevant to athletic training practice and systematic studies of athletic training clinical practice.

The approach to synthesizing research findings has evolved significantly over the past 2 decades. Traditional literature reviews are subjective, mostly narrative, and not easily replicated. In contrast, this newer, objective, systematic approach to summarizing the literature uses scientific principles and rules to compile research findings that can be replicated to form consensus guidelines and to focus further study in a topic area.<sup>3</sup> Systematic reviews evaluate the scientific evidence for a specific intervention from multiple studies in a very controlled, complex, and systematic manner. Meta-analyses are special cases of systematic reviews that involve actual statistical analysis of data combined from multiple studies, culminating in a composite estimate of health effect. In this issue, Hubbard et al<sup>4</sup> report one of the first systematic reviews of an athletic training-specific clinical intervention, addressing the question, “Does cryotherapy hasten return to participation?”

We invite submissions for this new section, “Evidence-Based Practice,” from the NATA membership and other health care professionals. The format for “Evidence-Based Practice” starts with a succinct, clinically relevant question. Authors should identify a published article describing a systematic review, meta-analysis, or large controlled-trial study that addresses the clinical question of interest. A summary of the article describes the methods and results, and a commentary section brings the information together to provide insight for applying the information to clinical athletic training practice. The format limits the review and commentary to 2 pages because the purpose of the section is to provide easily digestible information to busy clinicians. Ideally, *JAT* may publish 1 to 5 reviews in each issue. An example is provided in this issue that may be used by prospective contributors as a guide for formatting future submissions. Potential authors should consult the *JAT* Authors’ Guide in each issue and on the *JAT* Web site (<http://www.journalofathletictraining.org>) for complete instructions. (Authors requiring additional assistance should contact the Editorial Office.) Each submission will be subject to the same peer-review process as all other submissions to *JAT*.

In addition to providing short, easily digestible, and applicable reviews that will enable busy athletic training clinicians to integrate the newest research findings into their daily clinical practice, we hope these reviews published as part of “Evidence-Based Practice” will be used to guide the development of future evidence-based clinical practice guidelines, as proposed by Denegar and Hertel.<sup>5</sup>

### REFERENCES

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5. Denegar CR, Hertel J. Editorial: clinical education reform and evidence-based clinical practice guidelines. *J Athl Train*. 2002;37:127–128.

*Editor’s Note:* Jennifer M. Hootman, PhD, ATC, is an epidemiologist in the Division of Adult and Community Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, GA, and a *Journal of Athletic Training* Associate Editor.