



MedStar Health

# Sports medicine **monthly.**

Trusted medical partner of Montgomery County Public Schools

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## Champions of Health Care!

When you think of what defines a champion, most would recognize the most common being a person who has defeated or surpassed all rivals in a competition. But did you know there is a second definition where someone speaks or acts in favor of a person or cause. This second definition is more what I think of when you talk about an athletic trainer being a champion. They have their patients and athletes' best interest in mind to help them achieve their goals where it might just be chasing that "gold medal". Still not convinced? Maybe you're unsure what an athletic trainer is or what we do.

For starters what is an Athletic Trainer? Athletic Trainers (ATs) are Nationally Board Certified Licensed Allied Healthcare professionals that work in a multitude of settings with a focus on sports medicine. It is the role of an Athletic Trainer to prevent, evaluate, treat injuries, provide timely referrals to the appropriate physicians, and help facilitate a safe environment for the athlete to recover and return to play at their highest potential. Our practice is evidence based to improve outcomes while adhering to a code of ethics. Athletic trainers go above and beyond the definition of a champion on behalf of their athletes



How do we become these champions you may ask? Athletic trainers' focus is education, not only for themselves but for the community they are serving. To become an ATC (Athletic Training Certified) you apply to a master's degree accreditation program after receiving your undergraduate degree. Unlike other programs, it is a very hands-on program requiring in-class teaching as well as internships in various settings applying the skills you learned in class. Once ATs are out in their field, they spend time assessing their athlete's general health and function with emphasis on the steps that can be taken to prevent injuries. They also educate athletes, coaches, and parents about issues such as hydration and how to identify the signs and symptoms associated with injuries such as concussions. An athlete that becomes a champion is one that takes care of themselves on and off the field, and athletic trainers play a huge part.

With athletic trainers playing these pivotal roles in the health care system we help serve our communities by providing coverage for college athletics, high school sports, and other community events. During these events we are the first responders to injury and help facilitate appropriate care for our athletes/patients. Time in some of these situations is crucial, such as cardiac arrest, heat stroke, fractures, and other life-threatening injuries. Athletic trainers practice early recognition of signs and symptoms, just like a champion athlete practices a skill until it's perfect. As the saying goes, practice makes perfect.

Not only are athletic trainers in the standard settings of high school, college, professional and orthopedic clinics, they are now seen in more emerging settings like Performing Arts, Military, and Industrial/ Occupational Health. These fields have recognized the importance of early intervention that athletic trainers can provide to these "industrial athletes" to reduce injuries and keep them in the "game". These opportunities also give our profession more autonomy in what setting works best for the athletic trainer.

Athletic trainers play a crucial role in our health care system by being able to adapt in new settings. All great athletes that become champions face adversity as they strive for the gold medal; as athletic trainers we strive for excellence in the care we provide for all patients and athletes. If you haven't given your athletic trainer a gold medal yet, don't worry. We will gladly accept your understanding and appreciation for all that we do, because we ARE champions in health care.