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## Mass Casualty Events: Are Certified Athletic Trainer Prepared to Act?

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**Objective:** The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of certified athletic trainers on preparedness for mass casualty events.

**Design and Setting:** This study was conducted using survey research. The study took place in Midwestern United States. The independent variables were certified athletic trainers grouped by gender and employment setting. The dependent variables were knowledge and implementation of emergency action plans in mass casualty events.

**Participants:** A convenience sample of 75 surveys were distributed for a 64% (N=48) return rate. There were 44% (n=21) male participants and 56% (n=27) female participants. They were further broken down into seven different employment settings. Ten percent (n=5) work in the D1 College setting, 4% (n=2) work in the D2 College setting, 16% (n=8) work in D3 College setting, 41% (n=20) work in the High School setting, 18% (n=9) work in the Clinical setting, and 8% (n=4) selected the Other option.

**Intervention:** The instrument chosen for this particular project was a Survey Monkey questionnaire. This instrument was approved for use with human subjects by the IRB. The questionnaire contains 17 questions. The face validity was obtained through the review of a panel of experts. The content validity was obtained through the creation of the Table of Specifications. A Chi Square test was used with gender as a grouping variable and a Kruskal Wallis test was used with employment setting as a grouping variable. The alpha level was set at 0.05 *a priori*. Descriptive statistics (percentages and frequency counts) were used where applicable.

**Main Outcome Measurement:** Question one was a four point Likert scale with four being strongly agree, three being agree, two being disagree, and one being strongly disagree. Question two was a two point Likert Scale with two being yes and one being no. Questions three through thirteen are a four point Likert Scale with four being strongly agree,

three being agree, two being disagree, and one being strongly disagree. Question fourteen asked the participant to fill in the number of Emergency Action Plan practice sessions per year. Question fifteen was a two point Likert Scale with two being male and one being female. Question sixteen asked the participant to fill in their years of certification. Question seventeen was a seven point Likert Scale with seven being Professional Teams, six being D1 College, five being D2 College, four being D3 College, three being High School, two being Clinical setting, and one being Other and also asking the participant to fill in the blank to identify their work setting.

**Results:** The perceptions of certified athletic trainers indicate a certain level of preparedness to act in a mass casualty event. 81% (n=39) strongly agreed or agreed that they are prepared to act if a mass casualty event were to occur. Although a very high percentage believe they are prepared to act, only 8% (n=4) have had previous experience with providing care at a mass casualty event and they were employed by a D1 College and a High School ( $H=12.000$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p=0.035$ ). Of the participants surveyed, 43% (n=21) believed they were not prepared to insert an Oral Pharyngeal Airway and 36% (n=17) believed they were not prepared to insert a Nasal Pharyngeal Airway. There was a significant difference between males and females when asked if they believe they are prepared to insert an Oral Pharyngeal Airway ( $\chi^2=8.655$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=0.034$ ). More females believed they were prepared to insert an Oral Pharyngeal Airway than males. When asked if they believe they are prepared to insert a Nasal Pharyngeal Airway ( $H=11.143$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p=0.049$ ), all settings but the Clinical and Other setting answered with majority of strongly agrees or agrees.

**Conclusions:** Although very few certified athletic trainers had previous experience in providing care at a mass casualty event, the majority surveyed believe they are prepared to act if a mass casualty event were to occur. Certified Athletic Trainers

believe they are prepared to use their emergency care skills but once separated into specific skills, the amount of certified athletic trainers that believe they

are prepared is not as large as believed. This indicates a need for athletic trainers to have further training and preparation specifically for mass casualty events.

**Key Words:** *Certified Athletic Trainers, Mass Casualty Events, Emergency Preparedness, Emergency Action Plan, Emergency Care Skills*