

# The Plight of Athletic Training Graduates in a Third World Country: An Obscure and Unregulated Profession in Jamaica

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Sports treatment and rehabilitation in Jamaica appears to be a costly struggle for athletes of all ages, with very few facilities and specialists on the island. However, the introduction of the athletic training (AT) profession can bridge the gap in sports treatment and rehabilitation by creating a solid foundation for athletes, especially at the high school level. After 12 years of establishing the course of study in Jamaica, athletic trainers (ATs) are still not recognized and are unable to practice.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to highlight the plight of the athletic training profession in Jamaica.

**Methods:** The study was conducted using an explanatory case study design that used an open-ended survey to collect data from AT graduates. A total of 20 participants were selected using a combined sampling method that utilized purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Google forms were used to create the open-ended questions and a content analysis method that utilized multi-analyst coding was used to establish relevant themes and categories from the responses.

**Results:** The results of the study indicated that graduates are finding it extremely difficult to get jobs as athletic trainers, due to the lack of awareness, promotion, and ambiguity of AT in Jamaica. Despite the challenges, graduates believed that a national AT association is crucial for seeking licensure and promoting awareness of the profession in Jamaica.

**Conclusion:** If recognized, ATs can significantly help to boost sports treatment in Jamaica and contribute to greater sporting performances.

**Keywords:** allied health professionals, athletic trainers, developing profession.

## INTRODUCTION

ATs are allied health professionals that respond to emergent, acute, and chronic injuries while striving for prevention, evaluation, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of other medical conditions (Huggins et al., 2019). ATs are the only interdisciplinary healthcare professionals who are specifically trained in injury prevention for the physically active, as well as providing onsite emergency and non-emergency care, coordinating appropriate follow-up, conducting rehabilitation, and returning individuals to safe sports participation (Huggins et al., 2019).

According to the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) as cited in Huggins et al. (2019), ATs are highly certified, multi-skilled health care professionals who provide service or treatment under the guidance of or in partnership with a physician, according to their education, training, and state legislation, guidelines, and regulations. NATA's position is that ATs offer primary care, injury and disease prevention, wellness promotion and education, urgent care, examination, clinical diagnosis, therapeutic intervention, and rehabilitation of injuries and medical conditions

as members of the health care team (Huggins et al., 2019). Since the establishment of NATA and the improved offerings in AT qualification, more allied health care professionals are available to prevent, evaluate, diagnose, treat, and rehabilitate sporting injuries (Shanley et al., 2019). This has helped to improve the speed of recovery and the quality of athletic performances. According to Shanley et al. (2019), AT is ideally positioned to perform a vital role in managing the health of our local communities, given the extent of AT practice and the scale of scholastic athletic injuries.

In Jamaica, AT is a very new profession that is not recognized by the government or sporting industries in the country. In fact, the Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine (CPSM) is a statutory body established under the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act, 1965 and Regulations of 1974, with adjustments made to reflect changes in 1995 and 2005 (The Jamaica Gleaner, 2012). The Council reports to the Minister of Health and Wellness who appoints its members. This regulatory body has yet to recognize AT despite its need and popularity in other countries. According to the Jamaica Gleaner (2009), the University of Technology, Jamaica launched its Faculty of Science and Sport comprising three schools and a center. One of the schools under the faculty was the Caribbean School of Sport Sciences (CSOSS), which started offering AT. The University of Technology, Jamaica is the only institution in the English-speaking Caribbean offering a Bachelor of Science in AT. Since then, the university had over five graduating cohorts which it hopes will complement our ever-growing impact on sports globally (The Jamaica Gleaner, 2009). Since the introduction of this new profession in 2010, the questions are still being asked, is there a place for ATs in Jamaica? And can they help to improve Jamaica's sporting success? The Government of Jamaica through the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport (MCGES) have signaled the need for more sports rehabilitation facilities, innovations, and research with the signing of a memorandum of understanding with Montefiore University Hospital/Albert Einstein Medical School to establish a sports medicine rehabilitation program (Reckord, 2022). According to Reckord (2022), the program will ensure that athletes have easier

access to medical care and less costly services and equipment. While the need for better medical care and less expensive equipment is important, the need to establish regulatory supportive medical systems such as AT and other allied health care professionals is essential for Jamaica's continued sporting success.

Currently, there are no regulatory structures established to govern AT in Jamaica, because it is not recognized under law as a profession supplementary to medicine. As a result, the graduates leaving the only institution offering AT are unable to practice with their degrees. Employment in this area of allied health care is even more difficult because the profession is not known in Jamaica, and the challenges in terms of salary and operational details are unknown. The graduates leaving the program are venturing into the great unknown and must seek employment in unrelated professions wherever they are able to get a job, to ensure they can meet their student loans and other personal expenses. According to Mazerolle et al. (2012), ATs have a variety of job possibilities after graduation, including additional study in a variety of graduate programs, post-professional degrees in AT, or direct entry into the field through high schools, collegiate athletics internships, or outreach roles. Despite the possibilities highlighted by Mazerolle et al. (2012), the promotion and awareness of the need for ATs in Jamaica is missing, despite the rich history of sports in the country. Many of the AT graduates in Jamaica have gotten jobs as secretaries, call center operators, fitness trainers, and gym instructors in addition to other areas. As a result, the study sought to highlight the plight of the athletic training profession in Jamaica. This study can significantly help to increase the awareness in Jamaica's sporting industry about the AT profession. This will also provide more options for athletes in seeking medical care and could potentially help to enhance Jamaica's sporting success.

## METHODS

The researcher utilized an explanatory multiple-case study design. This research design sought to explain the causes and consequences of AT graduates' plight with practicing in Jamaica. According to Turnbull et al. (2021), a case study design will help to investigate the phenomena,

develop hypotheses, and test an approach. Additionally, case study research aims to address the “what,” “where,” and “how” questions posed by a research challenge, similar to the questions posed while designing an experiment. The finding of commonalities between cases increases the validity of emergent theory from individual case studies, which is an advantage of conducting case studies (Turnbull et al., 2021). The researcher believed that this design would be most appropriate to understand the phenomena and have graduates share their experiences seeking jobs and working with an AT degree. These lived experiences from the graduates helped the researcher to deduce the challenges facing AT graduates and the potential personal and industrial consequences of these challenges.

To date, the University of Technology, Jamaica is the only institution in the Caribbean offering an AT degree. In 2010, the institution started offering AT degrees, which saw the first set of graduates leaving the program in the 2014/15 academic year. Since the establishment of the AT degree, a total of 38 persons have graduated from the program (CSOSS, 2022). AT is not well known in Jamaica; however, these graduates are expected to prevent, assess, diagnose, treat, and rehabilitate injuries, diseases, and pathologies in athletes and other physically active people (CSOSS, 2022). With Jamaica’s active sporting culture and the highly competitive nature of school sports, AT seems like a necessity, especially in helping athletes to recover from the lack of sports participation during the heights of the COVID-19 pandemic (Rowe & Garriques, 2021). As a result of the introduction of this new profession in Jamaica, the researcher sought to get a better understanding of the aspirations of the athletic training profession in Jamaica. A combined sampling technique that incorporated purposive and snowball techniques was used to select participants for this study. The purposive sampling techniques were chosen to select participants that had specific characteristics (being a graduate of the AT program) for this study. While the snowball technique required existing participants to provide referrals to recruit other AT graduates required for the study. A total of 20 graduates (as seen in Table 1) were recruited and agreed to participate in the study.

Table 1. The Demographic Breakdown of Participants

Ages	23–32 years
Gender	Females 12 Males 8
Parishes Represented	9
Graduation years	2015 - 2022
Practicing ATs	2
Practicing in Other Sport-Related Areas	5
Practicing in Non-Sporting Areas or Unemployed	13
Total Participants	20

A research proposal was written to the university’s ethics committee for ethical approval. After ethical approval was granted to conduct the study, the research then proceeded to pilot the instrument with four of the 2022 graduates to ensure the feasibility of the instrument and the study. Also, the pilot study ensured that issue was being covered in totality, which required adjustments to the instrument and the study. After pilot study results were used to adjust the main study, the researcher wrote a formal email request to the program director of the CSOSS for a list of graduates since the AT program started. Once the list was received, the researcher sought to reach all 38 participants through emails and phone messages. However, only 25 participants were reached and 20 opted to participate in the study while five declined the invitation to participate. The other 18 graduates could not be reached by phone or email. Once participants accepted the request to participate, the necessary information was sent in the form of a Google link. The researcher’s justification of the sample size is based on the acceptable practices in qualitative study (20–30 participants) and the availability of participants for the study (Boddy, 2016). Furthermore, Merriam (2009) supported these reasons for choosing a qualitative sample size by stating that it depends on the goals of the study, the data that is gathered, how it is evaluated, and the resources that are available. However, according to Creswell (2013), just a few participants are needed when employing a case study approach to gather in-depth information on a phenomenon. The participants that were recruited through the

snowballing process received the link via their phones. Participants were required to complete an open-ended survey, however, before proceeding to the questions the participants had to read the consent section of the survey that included the purpose of the study, risks, the significance of the study, confidentiality, and giving permission for their responses to be used in the study. Once consent was given by participants, the form took participants to the open-ended survey questions. The open-ended survey (as seen in Table 2) contained 20 items; one item that covered demographic and 19 items that covered graduates' experience as an athletic trainer, the challenges facing them, the preparation to practice, their role in Jamaican sports, the need for ATs, and strategies to improve the practice and awareness of the profession.

Table 2. Open-ended Survey Questions

1. Please indicate your gender, age, graduation year, and parish of residence
2. Are you practicing as an athletic trainer in Jamaica? If not, why? If yes, tell me about your experiences thus far?
3. Are you practicing in any other related field? If yes, why? And tell me about your experience thus far
4. Please describe your current position (title, part or full time, setting, other ATs around), and how long you have been in that current position?
5. Describe your level of satisfaction with your current job?
6. Describe the returns on your investment in an Athletic Training Degree
7. Explain your reasons for deciding to study athletic training
8. Tell me about your current expenses and the ability of your current salary to meet them
9. What are the plans you have for your future in this profession?
10. What are the major challenges facing athletic training graduates in Jamaica?
11. What is it like trying to get employment as an athletic trainer in Jamaica?

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| 12. Is there ambiguity in how people see AT versus other similar professions such as physiotherapists? explain!   |
| 13. How would you describe your experience of transitioning from a student to a full-time position as an athletic trainer or your current job?                                |
| 14. How do graduates see the importance of athletic training in Jamaican sports?  |
| 15. From your experiences, how important is athletic training to injury rehabilitation of young athletes in the Jamaica context?  |
| 16. Explain the roles you think athletic trainers should be playing in the Jamaican sporting industry   |
| 17. Do you think the level of training gained in your course of study has equipped you with enough knowledge to make final decisions about the medical care of your athletes? |
| 18. Tell me about the level of confidence you have as a graduate to practice athletic training in Jamaica   |
| 19. What strategies do graduates see as necessary to improve the practice and awareness of the profession?  |
| 20. What can the government or the Ministry of Sports do to improve practice and awareness of athletic training in Jamaica?   |

The data were analyzed using content analysis that utilized five stages (Kirillova, 2018). The first stage required the researcher to download the data from Google forms. Once the data was downloaded it was compiled on a Microsoft word document which started stage two of the analysis process. The second stage required reading and re-reading the data to examine the themes that emerged while trying to find linkages between themes. Once the categories for coding were established, the emerging themes were recorded and coded. Stage three required setting clear rules for the coding process and organizing the units of meaning into the previously defined categories. Stage four required coding the text according to the established rules by going through each text and recording all relevant data in the appropriate categories. This was done for all questions that were asked. The final stage re-

quired the researcher to analyze the results and draw conclusions, once coding was completed, the collected data is examined to find patterns and emerging themes that were used to represent the findings of the study (Kirillova, 2018). Additionally, member checking, a coding system, and multiple-analyst triangulations were used to establish trustworthiness and credibility within the process of data analysis. To enhance this process, a qualitative software tool called NVivo was also used to analyze and compare the results found through the manual process. Afterwards, the multiple-analyst triangulation method was used to identify the emerging themes. The method used a table format to group the manual process and that of NVivo. Similar themes were grouped and emerging themes were identified across the grouped similarities.

## RESULTS

Getting the viewpoints of ATs in the field was very important in understanding how this new profession is being received. As a result, the study sought to highlight the plight of AT graduates in an obscure and unregulated profession in Jamaica. The participants were asked to answer open-ended survey questions which were analyzed using a content analysis technique.

Table 3. The Emerging Themes and Sub-categories

<p><b>Practicing AT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role ambiguity</li> <li>• Confidence to practice</li> <li>• Returns on investment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Challenges Facing AT Graduates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Salary and recognition</li> <li>• Student loan repayment</li> </ul>
<p><b>The AT Curriculum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of the curriculum</li> <li>• More practical hours</li> <li>• Level of training</li> </ul>
<p><b>Practice and Awareness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National AT association</li> <li>• Government intervention</li> <li>• Guideline for AT practice</li> </ul>

### Practicing AT

The participants were asked about their experiences practicing AT in Jamaica. However, from the 20 participants only two were practicing AT in Jamaica, the participants that were not practicing AT expressed the difficulty they faced in getting a job as an athletic trainer. P10 indicated that *“I have not gained a job opportunity to work or practice as an athletic trainer”*, while P18 believed that *“the profession in Jamaica wasn’t certified for graduates to practice in the country”*. The ATs expressed their disappointment that they have not been able to land a job in their profession because companies are not hiring ATs. P4 indicated that *“I haven’t found a company or opportunity to engage my athletic training skills”*, while P6 explained that:

I presently don’t have a job in this field and I’m not practicing either. The experience so far is bittersweet because I really love this profession but there is no growth and no jobs. The profession

Participants who indicated that they were among the first cohort of ATs to graduate from the program from 2014 to 2016 have not been able to get an AT job. The participants were asked to share their experiences trying to get an AT job in Jamaica. All the participants indicated that getting an AT job was very difficult, P7 indicated that *“it is very difficult because athletic training is not prominent in the Caribbean, persons are not aware who ATs are, thus the employment opportunities are not really there, to begin with.”* P16 explained that *“one would have to explain the profession, educate persons about the job, and try to persuade employers. The trust would have to be there so that the employer can take a ‘risk’ to employ you.”* Based on the experiences of the participants, they were asked if a job market exists in Jamaica for ATs, and the majority of the participants agree that the need for the profession in Jamaica is evident. P4 indicated that *“yes there is a market, sporting events happening in Jamaica all year round, there is a need for ATs in the sports industry or at these events.”*

Participants were also asked if they had found employment in other related fields. The majority of the participants were not able to find jobs in any related sporting fields. While some of the respondents were able to find jobs in related fields, P3 indicated that *“I am a Physical Edu-*

cation teacher. The experience I have so far is great and I am loving it.” P3 further explained that “with the sixth-form students that I teach, the knowledge gained from biomechanics, exercise physiology, sports psychology, sports management, and anatomy has helped me to relate much better to that content and my students.” While P17 indicated that “yes, I am employed as a technical chiropractic assistant. Thus far the experience has been good, different modalities and areas in athletic training are utilized in chiropractic care.” The participants were asked if they were satisfied with their current jobs, the responses were mixed as the participants that were working as ATs or in a closely related field were more satisfied than the participants who could not get a job or were involved in jobs that were unrelated to their trained profession. Despite the satisfaction that was expressed by some of the participants, when asked about getting adequate returns on their investment of an AT degree, the majority of the participants indicated that they were not getting adequate returns on their investment.

Participants were also asked why they chose to do a degree in AT since it was a new profession in Jamaica. The majority of the respondents indicated that they chose an AT degree because of the need they saw for injury rehabilitation in high school sports, and their love for sports and physical fitness. P4 indicated that:

*I see it as a need, especially at the high school level where injuries are prominent, and the student-athletes do not have the required resources to fully recover from injuries. I was a student-athlete who had sustained some injuries and because of the lack of resources or personnel, I wasn't able to fully recover from the injuries that affected me later in my years. So, I decided to study athletic training as a means to help upcoming future star athletes to recover and even prevent injuries that will hinder or derail them from doing their best and becoming future star athletes.*

While participant P12 indicated that “I understand what it's like to be injured because of sports and I want to help persons feel comfortable either going through the process of rehabilitation or assisting in reducing the cause of injuries.” Despite having some bad experiences trying to get jobs, the majority of the

participants when asked about their future in the profession, wants to continue to improve and advocate for their profession. Others have indicated their interest in further developing themselves and starting their own AT businesses. P1 indicated that “I plan to advocate the need for ATs in the working field, especially at the primary and high school levels and even at a professional level.” While P18 indicated that “I want to advance my profession internationally, possibly create a facility in Jamaica that will create jobs for myself and other future ATs” and P9 wants to “become the head athletic trainer of an NFL team/developing athletic training in Jamaica.”

### **The AT Curriculum**

Based on the experiences of participants after graduating from the AT program, participants were asked about the level of training gained in their course of study to equip them to make final decisions about the medical care of their athletes. The majority of the participants believed that their course of study adequately prepared them to be athletic trainers, however, the participants believed that a lot more practical experience is needed in the program. P6 indicated that “yes, although much research is also done to facilitate critical thinking in making medical care decisions for athletes ... much more hands-on training is required.” While P15 also indicated “yes it has, however at the end of every year each student doing athletic training should get more exposure to working with clients instead of waiting for the final year.” Based on our context in Jamaica, the participants were asked if their course of study fully prepared them to operate in Jamaica. The majority of the respondents indicate that it adequately prepared them for our context, however, they believed that more practical engagement in schools and other sporting facilities was needed.

### **Challenges Facing AT Graduates**

Participants were asked about the major challenges that they faced as graduates of the AT program. The challenges are sentiments being echoed by all the participants, they indicated that employment was one of the major challenges they

faced. P5 explained, “*the lack of work or placement because of the limited knowledge of who an athletic trainer is and the competitiveness of the physiotherapy profession.*” P9 indicated that “*we can’t find work in our area of study mainly because the profession is widely unknown and for those who know, they either can’t afford to hire a trainer or choose not to*”. The participants also indicated that the limited employment available to them has affected their ability to repay student loans and live comfortably. Additionally, the fact that the profession is unknown and unregulated means they are not recognized for their work. P20 indicated that “*it is not a registered profession in Jamaica and so a lot of persons are not aware of the profession.*”

Another challenge that was expressed by the participants is the ambiguity in the profession. P6 indicated that “*yes there is, some persons are not aware or not interested in the purpose that we serve as they believe that a physiotherapist would be more capable of handling sports-related matters in regard to injuries or the wellbeing of an athlete.*” Additionally, P16 indicated that “*yes there is, the domains of AT are misconstrued with physiotherapist, e.g., clinical procedures, not being given the green light to identify and treat injuries of athletes because we’re looked down on.*”

### Practice and Awareness

Participants were asked about strategies that they think would improve practice and awareness of their profession. The majority of the participants believed that a national association was needed to govern the practice of AT in Jamaica. P12 indicated that “*establishing an association and promoting the profession is a strategy that could help.*” While P10 believed that “*marketing the profession, having workshops, and volunteering*” would help to promote the profession in Jamaica. However, P7 believed that a more direct approach is needed to “*make it mandatory for high school sports teams to have at least one AT because sports locally is most popular at the high school level. Making trainers mandatory at that level would improve the understanding of who an athletic trainer is.*” Additionally, P11 indicated that “*for the month of March and other months we need to continuously promote athletic training on the radios, television, newspaper and*

*in schools that are highly involved in sports.*” In terms of improving the practice, the majority of the participants believed more practical exposure in the curriculum will produce better ATs. P11 explained that:

Sending students to work with individuals at the end of every school year, for example, year 1... 2–4 weeks of observation, year 2 ... 3–4 weeks of sports rotation. Year 3, 2 weeks of practicum learning to take notes and assessment, and 2 weeks of attending matches with UTech’s team. Year 4, 6 weeks of practicum ... (include taking notes, assessment, treating, and giving a report on a client they have worked with (case study).

Additionally, the participants believed that licensing and exposure by collaborating with overseas entities and having consultation camps for Jamaican athletes at both the amateur and professional levels will help to promote awareness of the profession. The participants also suggested that specific guidelines for practice will solve the issue of ambiguity between physiotherapists and ATs and improve the profession. P2 indicated that “*yes there should be specific role guidelines because when I inform individuals of my role, they think of us as physiotherapists.*” Participants were also asked about the role of the MCGES and the Government of Jamaica in helping to improve the practice and awareness of AT in Jamaica. All the participants believed that at least the MCGES should play a role in the promotion of AT which can be a supporting arm for injury prevention and rehabilitation in Jamaica. P14 indicated that the government should “*give the Athletic Training Association a green card to host events to bring about knowledge and understanding of what we are about.*” While P17 indicated that the government should “*ensure that AT is recognized as a necessity for athletes, through coaches and schools, to ensure proper care for young and advanced athletes.*”

## DISCUSSION

Jamaicans are known worldwide for their athletic abilities; from as early as elementary school, Jamaican students are encouraged to participate in sports. Despite our success internationally, athletic care in Jamaica seems to be

an expensive challenge facing athletes of all ages (Irving & Charlton, 2010). Many athletes tend to get injured at the high school level and without proper treatment for the injury, these athletes are not able to recover and their careers end before they begin (Irving & Charlton, 2010). These athletes, even after they end their careers, still have these injuries that affect their mobility and force them to find out-of-pocket expenses to cover these injuries. The Jamaican newspapers have highlighted the reality of injuries affecting our athletes from amateurs to professionals from as far back as the 1984 Olympic Games. Injuries are inevitable in sports, but effective care can speed up recovery, prevent further injuries and strengthen muscles (Irving & Charlton, 2010). Based on the magnitude of sporting activities that schools, associations, clubs, and national teams participate in, is there a need for ATs to boost athletic care? But most essentially, would a culture of improvements in athletic care enhance Jamaica's performance in sports globally? As a result, the study sought to highlight the aspirations of the athletic training profession in Jamaica.

AT can be an important part of athletes' care at all levels, especially at the high school level in Jamaica. As a country that values sports, we need to start following the models of other first-world countries. The Barter et al. (2021) study also indicated that in the secondary school setting, an athletic trainer has a positive impact on the reported incidence of sports-related concussions and post-concussion management activities, as well as reducing emergency room visits and cardiac-related deaths, providing preventative medicine services, and improving patient access to care. Jamaica's secondary schools' sporting programs are world-renowned in producing high-quality sportsmen and women, the introduction of AT as a mandatory rehabilitation support arm would boost our sporting performance and the longevity of our athletes. The implementation of structured AT in sports programs in Jamaica may help to provide emergency care, injury prevention, rehabilitation of musculoskeletal injuries, education, and wellness promotion. Thomas et al. (2017) also believed that ATs are essential in preventing injury and illness, as well as fostering excellent health and well-being in patients. Thomas et al. (2017) further explained that by ed-

ucating patients, ATs can play a role in avoiding illness and protecting a person's wellbeing.

While it is important for us to get ATs as a permanent part of our sporting structure, we must realize that in 12 years only 38 ATs have graduated from the only institution offering the program in Jamaica, and there are more than 150 secondary schools and other sporting institutions, so much more investment in training is needed to realize the dream of first world sporting standards. Additionally, proper implementation of AT in secondary schools would help young athletes in Jamaica who are often injured and are not knowledgeable about healing and proper athletic care. They would now have ATs to guide them before they return to the field of play, this will help to prolong their careers from an early stage. The Barter et al. (2021) study has corroborated these results, indicating that ATs may take many actions at the local practice level to deliver better patient-centered care to these underserved populations, hence increasing access to treatment. However, AT is not available at all institutions, and even fewer schools offer full-time AT jobs. AT would provide the competitive edge Jamaica needs to pivot into sporting success and longevity. P9 captured the need for ATs perfectly by indicating that "in Jamaican sports, proper rehabilitation and care of musculoskeletal issues are missing. Over the years coaches tend to try and solve these issues themselves, however, it is outside of their role. This causes athletes to have different chronic injuries which tend to end their careers."

The results of the Manspecker and Hanckemeier (2019) study of perceptions of collegiate ATs found that there were challenges in the capacity to engage in interprofessional collaborative practice owing to geographical location, available members of the team with whom to interact, and a general understanding of the AT skill set by other health care professionals. While the Kasamatsu et al. (2020) study reported documentation problems such as a lack of time owing to high patient load and different providers or sites where care was administered. These difficulties frequently influenced their documentation habits, such as the process and criteria for deciding whether or not to document, the information documented, and the placement and timeliness

of documentation. Those are challenges being experienced in developed nations where AT has already been established. In a third-world country such as Jamaica, with the introduction of this new profession, the major challenges affecting AT graduates are poor awareness and promotion of their profession which causes some level of ambiguity, especially with similar professions. Additionally, the process of licensure to practice AT in Jamaica has not yet been established. Furthermore, the lack of organized structure and representation including no formal association is adding to the challenges affecting graduates.

The overarching challenge that graduates have is the limited employment opportunities (only two of the 20 graduates are employed as an athletic trainer) and the inability to practice in their profession which meant they were not getting effective returns on their AT degree. Despite the challenges, Stollery's (2010) study indicated that AT is a fast-growing area with a diverse range of employment opportunities. However, young ATs, like any other young professional, may face poor pay and difficult working conditions despite their specialized expertise. Hospitals, clinics, physician offices, police enforcement, the military, industrial and commercial organizations, and the performing arts are all places where ATs might find work.

Effective representation through the organization of a national AT association will seek licensure and promote awareness of the profession is one strategy that can help the profession in Jamaica. Additionally, the main strategies graduates believed are necessary to improve the practice of ATs are a revision of the AT curriculum and continuous professional development in the area. More constant practical exposure would help to improve the confidence and practice of ATs. Bacon et al. (2021) believed that evidence-based practice (EBP) has been emphasized in sports training for more than a decade as a necessary cultural shift for the profession's advancement. EBP has been identified as a key ability throughout the

AT curriculum, and the profession has made major efforts to develop an EBP culture. Bacon et al. (2021) further explain that knowledge translation is needed to encourage a more collaborative dialogue to improve the degree of evidence-based treatment offered to patients rather than a linear gap between the distribution of knowledge by academics and the burden of evidence application by clinicians. In Jamaica, government intervention is necessary to expedite the process of licensure for ATs to provide our sporting industry with more professions to continue improving athletic care. Additionally, clear guidelines to govern the practice of AT in Jamaica and reduce the level of ambiguity with other professions are most desirable for ATs. Walker et al. (2019) findings have corroborated this result indicating that their study also found that ATs also had job ambiguity due to a lack of understanding of basic organizational and administrative structures and expectations.

## CONCLUSION

Graduates believed that AT should be a necessary component in Jamaica's sporting set, especially at the high school level. Graduates using personal experiences believed that students in high schools are in great need of their services to provide emergency care, injury prevention, rehabilitation of musculoskeletal injuries, education, and wellness promotion. Despite the graduates seeing the need for AT in Jamaica, landing a job in the area has been extremely difficult, which is the overarching challenge graduates are facing. This has been attributed to poor awareness and promotion of their profession which caused some level of ambiguity, especially with similar professions. Additionally, licensure to practice AT in Jamaica has not yet been established and the lack of organized structure and representation including no formal association were among some of the major challenges facing graduates. Despite the challenges, graduates believed that a national AT association will aid in the seeking of licensure and promote awareness of the profession in Jamaica.

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