

# Athletic trainers have a positive economic impact on sports coverage for health systems

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The cost-effectiveness of certified outreach athletic trainers (ATC) as a type of physician extender in an orthopaedic provider and/or hospital system setting has many benefits, both financially and with patient care, say researchers presenting their work today at the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine's Annual Meeting in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

"The affiliation between high school and community sports teams and orthopaedists through an ATC in that setting is a unique and sustainable relationship that provides economic benefits to the health care system and to the patient," said lead researcher, Jeannie Buckner of the Medical University of South Carolina.

Buckner and her team performed a retrospective economic analysis from 2012-2015 at their institution. They analyzed new referrals, billable patient encounters and corresponding revenue generated exclusively from the ATC referral program. The data was assembled from an aggregate business analysis that included both physician group and hospital billing. The existing ATC program provides full athletic team coverage for eight local high schools, two professional teams, four semi-professional teams, one collegiate club team, and four youth club teams.

The results illustrated that of 8,570 billable patient encounters, 843 patients were referred into the system, yielding \$2,283,733 in total revenue. New [patients](#) accounted for 187 individuals and 1,602 billable patient encounters. On average, each patient generated 10.17 billable

patient encounters. Combining revenue from both professional-based and hospital-based services yielded an average of \$2,712 per patient that came through the ATC program within the four-year period.

"This model of having an ATC as an outreach support is not only economically viable for the health system, but is also a great example for coordinated and improved care in the community," said Buckner.

"Providing more comprehensive care during practices and games, may also help minimize future injuries and keep kids involved in athletics for longer, which in turn may lower [chronic medical conditions](#) in adulthood."

Provided by American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine

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