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New York State Athletic Trainers Step Up to Help Overburdened Health Care Systems Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

May 4, 2020 - (New York) Athletic trainers throughout New York are using their skills as healthcare professionals to aid understaffed hospitals and healthcare organizations in multiple ways, including screening, telemedicine, and infrastructure.

Such is the case at Cayuga Health System in Ithaca, NY, which developed a COVID-19 mass screening clinic. Prior to the pandemic, Adrian Western worked as a certified athletic trainer and the director of sports medicine and school health at the Cayuga Health Systems Sports Medicine Clinic. He oversaw delivery of athletic training, sports medicine and school health services to multiple high schools and colleges around the region. Now, his focus is ensuring an efficient and high-quality mechanism for COVID testing and sampling.

"I was initially tasked with assisting in developing protocols and managing our call center to facilitate physicians in ordering COVID-19 screening for their patients, assisting patients with scheduling appointments at the sampling site, and answering any questions that they may have in regards to the sampling," said Adrian Western. "When Cayuga Health System and the Tompkins County Health Department decided to expand our mass sampling site to sample all patients who are symptomatic and/or who have been exposed to another person who tested positive for COVID-19 without a physician order, I was asked to shift to being onsite at the mass sampling center to help with managing patient flow and logistics so that we could have the capability to test hundreds of patients per day."

Athletic trainers Elyse Moran and Nicole Humpf have also been routed to Cayuga Health System to help with the pandemic response. They have been helping with much of the administrative side by greeting patients, giving them instructions, answering any questions, ensuring a consistent message, and helping them to register for on-site testing. They say the reception to their work has been overall positive and helped to free up time for the directors at the center to focus on other tasks.

"Cayuga Health System has been so thankful that the Sports Medicine staff have been willing to step up into novel roles surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic (more than half of the Athletic Trainers at Cayuga Health System are working in COVID-19 related positions)," said Western. "I think that this speaks to the adaptability of athletic trainers; as well as, the breadth and depth of the skills that athletic trainers possess. Emergency and high stress situations are where athletic trainers thrive and this has become more evident with the strong work that the certified athletic trainers at Cayuga Health System have provided."

In addition to screening and testing, athletic trainers have had to switch to practicing telehealth to treat existing patients. Danielle Annis, David Bueti and Kimberly Garcia Mais are all certified athletic trainers working at New York Presbyterian Hudson Valley in the Department of Orthopedic Surgery and Sports Medicine. While they are unable to see patients physically, injuries do not stop in the middle of a



pandemic. The athletic trainers at NYP Hudson Valley are working tirelessly to ensure the community they are continuing high level care in a safe environment.

“As we do not have many patients coming into the office, and most of our physicians are doing telehealth visits remotely, the athletic trainers are now in a new leadership role in our office. We are the next in line after the physicians to manage day to day workflow, so we have been delegating tasks to the staff to accommodate optimal patient care during the COVID-19 crisis,” said Danielle Annis. “The certified athletic trainer team is working together to triage patients on whether appointments can be handled via telehealth or if they require an in-person appointment. If a telehealth visit is appropriate, we are assisting the patients in signing up and using our virtual visit platform, scheduling their appointment, and doing their initial intake. In many ways, instead of just doing our clinical athletic training role, we are taking on the roles of schedulers, clinical support staff, and managers in our daily workflow now.”

For more information, or to interview one of the athletic trainers in this story, please contact Susan Bardack at susan@buzzmediasolutions.com or 518.867.7940.

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ABOUT NEW YORK STATE ATHLETIC TRAINERS' ASSOCIATION

NYSATA, founded in 1976 and incorporated in 1989, stands to advance the profession of athletic training for the purpose of enhancing the quality of healthcare for the physically active in New York State. Comprised of over 1,500 Certified Athletic Trainers, NYSATA is the statewide affiliate of the regional Eastern Athletic Trainers' Association (EATA) and District Two of the [National Athletic Trainers' Association \(NATA\)](#).