

Respect at Heart of Various Issues

cover photo poor choice

dear editor:

I was disappointed to see a Powerade bottle on the July cover of our monthly news magazine. Gatorade is a Founding Sponsor of our organization (see ad on page 39) and has done a lot for the NATA. I would hope the editors of the magazine would use better judgment in selecting cover photos in the future. I hope Gatorade accepts the NATA's apology.

**steve atricker, atc
head athletic trainer
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dear reader:

We hate when we do these things! Especially when it involves one of our founding sponsors. We couldn't agree more with the letter to the editor and offer sincere apologies to Gatorade -- friend and partner of NATA in advancing the athletic training profession.

recognition can explain misuse of abbreviations

dear editor:

In the June 2003 edition of *NATA News* (p. 48), Drs. Knight, Starkey and Ingersoll describe the proper use of abbreviations to signify degrees, licenses and credentials, and write, "Some people are using credentials improperly, probably because of naiveté, which relates badly on the individual and the profession." The authors depict the fictitious Joseph Brown as a "silly" man because he signed a letter improperly

and exclaim the term ABD (All But Dissertation) should not be used because it is not an academic degree, license nor credential.

I have always been interested in the way people use titles and abbreviations. One of my favorite examples is the use of Dr. and PhD in the same signature. Signing a letter Dr. Joseph Brown, PhD, for example, seems repetitive. However, perhaps Joseph Brown has a reason for signing his name this way. It could be that Joseph wants to be called Dr. Brown, or maybe he believes the majority of people do not know PhD means doctor of philosophy. Regardless, I want to offer a plausible explanation for why ATCs may inadvertently use inappropriate abbreviations after their names: primarily, they want to be recognized.

For five years I worked as the program director of the CAAHEP-accredited athletic training education program at Wilmington College, a small career-oriented liberal arts college located in southwest Ohio. Unique to many small liberal arts colleges, and many athletic training rooms across the country, too, is the practice of calling professors and ATCs by their first names. Although this practice may help to break down barriers and show friendliness, I am convinced the use of first names by our students in professional settings like the classroom or the athletic training room is at the root of a complex issue which has, in part, resulted in the increased use of various abbreviations after one's name. In other words, people like to be recognized for their accomplishments. It is not a silly thing, but rather a human thing to want to be recognized. The famous psychologist Abraham Maslow defined recognition as an esteem need in his well-

known theory called the Hierarchy of Needs (www.das.sate.ne.us/personnel/nkn/oegresources/maslow.htm).

Unfortunately, the practice of calling people by their first names does not always establish respect. And, when coupled with the lack of understanding and appreciation many students have for the sacrifices and hard work necessary to obtain an advanced degree, license, credential (or for one's professional contributions or for reaching a particular educational milestone), many ATCs will seek humble recognition by listing abbreviations after their names.

In some ways, the use of credentials, any credentials, lends credibility to the profession by helping to sell athletic training as a true allied health profession. Emphasizing credentials is important when seeking state licensure or insurance recognition to ensure the uneducated individuals with whom we are working really understand the ATC is a truly qualified and educated professional.

Although I am not certain if anyone ever conducted a scientific study on the misuse of surname abbreviations, complicating the issue, especially the ABD question, is Carnegie Mellon University, which uses ABD in formal documents as form of recognition, giving credence to the term as an educational achievement (www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/ABD.htm).

Although Carnegie Mellon is not the standard in academe, the CMU policy does reflect an ever-changing world, and in some respects is similar to the NATA's recent investigation regarding the appropriateness of "certified athletic trainer" as a representative term for our profession.

Complicating the abbreviation eti-

quette issue even further is the abbreviation FACSM being used by several NATA members.

According to the American College of Sports Medicine Web site, FACSM is an abbreviation used to signify a fellowship. It is not an academic degree or license, nor does it appear to qualify as a credential because the holder does not complete a specific course of study and/or examination; rather, FACSM is an abbreviation of recognition, much like an honorary degree given at a college or university commencement.

As stated on the ACSM Web site, the fellowship program intends: 1). "To recognize professional achievement and competence in the related disciplines of sports medicine, and 2). To recognize the candidate who exhibits a deep and ongoing interest and dedication to the goals and long-range activities of the ACSM." The requirements for earning FACSM status include ACSM membership for at least three consecutive years, demonstrated high standards of professional development and a commitment to the goals and long-range activities of ACSM, a doctoral degree, attendance at two ACSM national meetings, record of service to sports medicine, nominations, references and submission of a CV.

FACSM status is a wonderful professional accolade, but like the ABD abbreviation, it too, does not appear to qualify as degree, license or credential and perhaps should be not be used by ATCs.

Some readers may be familiar with the movie *A Beautiful Mind*, about John Nash, the man who established the Nobel Prize-winning game theory of economics and whose struggles with paranoid schizophrenia served as the plot. Nash's story is powerful. However, I was most fascinated by the observations of his lifelong friend Harold Kuhn. Kuhn states, "Recognition is a cure for many ills," and believes the recognition Nash gained from winning the Nobel prize was partially responsible for his mental illness fading into remission.

The important point here is the majority of ATCs do not have Nash's problems, but they do, however, need to feel recognized. For some people, recognition means

respect. Therefore, listing an inappropriate abbreviation because it does not technically qualify as a degree, license or credential may have more to do with improving personal well-being than with ignorance or disrespect for the profession.

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