

# WHY STUDENT ATHLETES SEE THE DOCTOR



## What makes student-athletes seek medical care?

### What We Wanted To Know

This observational study was done to let doctors and other medical providers know why young athletes typically come to visit them. We analyzed every visit student-athletes made to an athletic training room clinic at Duke over the course of 5 years.

We wanted to find out what ailments (illness or injury) are most likely to make student-athletes visit a doctor. To do this, we looked at more than 5,000 visits to a Duke athletic clinic between January 2015 and January 2020. Our analysis includes only visits made by active Duke student-athletes. We did not use any data from visits made by coaches, team staff members, alumni athletes, or anyone else who had access to this clinic during this time period.



## Student-Athlete Characteristics



# of Athletes: 1,258



Average Age: 19.9

### The athletes analyzed in the study:

- Were all 18-25 years old
- Made 5,303 visits to the athletic training room clinic
- Were evenly split between males (50.2%) and females (49.8%)



## What These Results Mean

The most likely reason for any athlete to see a doctor is for an illness rather than an injury.

These results may not affect or apply to each person. This study is just one "piece of the puzzle." Additional information may be available from other studies now or in the future. We encourage athletes to discuss these results with their providers to decide if the results should affect their clinical care.



## What We Learned

- Football players were the most commonly seen type of athlete in the training room (15.2% of all visits).
- 2/3 of all athletes seek care at least once per year.
- The most common reason for a young athlete to see a doctor was for infection symptoms (runny nose and/or sore throat).
- The most common orthopedic complaints for student-athletes were back pain, knee pain, and foot pain.

### Top 10 Orthopedic Diagnoses in the Duke Student-Athlete Training Room

1. Back pain
2. Knee pain
3. Foot pain
4. Hip pain
5. Groin pain
6. Ankle pain
7. Wrist pain
8. Hamstring/Quadriceps strain
9. Patellar tendinitis
10. Shoulder pain

## Our Next Steps

With the knowledge from this study, universities can better plan and prepare for future athletes entering the athletic training room. They can buy more useful equipment, hire the right staff, and design more effective educational programs for athletes, coaches, and doctors.