



# Karen Lew, MEd, ATC, LAT

*Lecturer & Clinical Coordinator, University of Miami Athletic Training Education Program*

**AGE:** 40

**ALMA MATER(S):** UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS (B.S. HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION), UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA-MONROE (MEd, HEALTH AND HUMAN PERFORMANCE)

**HOBBIES:** WATCHING SPORTS, BEING WITH FAMILY, TRX CLASSES, SHOPPING AND ANYTHING NEW ORLEANS

**What inspired you to become an athletic trainer?** I was a very active child and after suffering a significant neck injury, my involvement with sports was limited. As I began high school and sought out career options, an orthopedic surgeon strongly encouraged me to pursue athletic training as a career in college.

**What do you enjoy most about the profession?** Networking and mentorship have always been important to me, and the athletic training profession is built on these principles. The ongoing and progressive education keeps me engaged and always seeking new opportunities to advance the health care of patients and improve my classroom teaching.

**What words of wisdom can you pass on to AT students who are struggling in the program?** Never give up. Take every opportunity you are given and make something out of it. An experience or situation does not always have to be a good one for you to learn from it. Success is not determined by your grades; success is measured by determination.

**What do you love most about working as an ATP faculty member?** Student involvement and collaboration are what I enjoy most about being an educator, as well as being creative in the classroom and seeing student success. In my 16 years as a faculty member, I've never had a day where I questioned my career choice.

**What are the biggest challenges you face on the job today?** I wish there were more hours in a day, which would enable me to spend more one-on-one time with students. Students need as much formal/informal mentoring and life coaching as possible,

and the hectic nature of our society often prevents me from spending as much time as I would like with them.

**Why did you want to be a part of the USA Cheer and its Medical Advisory Committee, and what is your role?** I was approached to become involved three years ago after demonstrating an interest in promoting cheerleading safety through educational programs. The educational process is a necessity, and I felt USA Cheer had an opportunity to expand its program to include all levels of cheerleading, as well as other athletes, coaches, parents and administrators.

As the director of safety and a member of the Medical Advisory Committee for USA Cheer, I ensure cheerleaders have access to the same resources as all other athletes, that they are adhering to safety guidelines, and I promote cheerleading as a safe activity. I've had the opportunity to present at numerous conferences and was part of the team that prepped USA Cheer's president for the White House Concussion Summit in May 2014, during which USA Cheer was recognized for its ongoing efforts and educational programs on head injuries.

USA Cheer and its Medical Advisory Committee are a coalition of cheerleading organizations working together toward maximizing opportunities for cheerleaders to perform safely. We are committed to ensuring all cheerleaders have access to the tools they need to succeed, including proper equipment, trained instructors and medical resources. As a committee, we also make recommendations for changes that should be made to make cheerleading safer. I feel the increased education has led to the recent decrease in injuries.

**Is cheerleading widely recognized as a sport among the collegiate athletic training community?** Cheerleading is not currently recognized as a sport amongst the collegiate ranks, but the athletes certainly deserve the same type of care as any other sport. Cheerleaders are athletic and should have access to all of the same resources.

**What would you be doing professionally if you hadn't become an athletic trainer?** I would have been an attorney specializing in sports law. §

