

Exercise Is Medicine

By Anthony Carey

As health system reform takes center stage in the United States, prevention has become a hot topic among lawmakers, media and the public. Some question the cost savings of preventive health care. Does it save money in the long run, or is it an expensive indulgence with too little benefit to justify the up-front cost?

Answer: It depends. While many diagnostics, such as colonoscopies and mammograms, save lives and head off expensive treatment regimens, some may be unneeded. Sound medical judgment and appropriate guidelines are required.

This kind of clarity for the patient is what the Exercise is Medicine™ initiative by the American College of Sports Medicine is all about. This initiative "is focused on encouraging primary care physicians and other health care providers to include exercise when designing treatment plans for patients." This may seem like an obvious part of every medical visit, but sadly, it's not.

The foundation of Exercise is Medicine was a need for medical providers to deliver a more direct and compelling message about the benefits of exercise beyond the ineffective, "you need to get more exercise" message. Providers of the Exercise is Medicine community are expected to document patient activity and ask about exercise as part of their vital questions, concluding each visit with an exercise prescription or referral to a qualified fitness professional. The Exercise is Medicine program advocates this initiative among

medical professionals similar to how pharmaceutical companies promote their products. After all, if there were a pill that provided all the benefits of exercise, certainly every physician would be keen to prescribe it! Physicians must be encouraging patients to take a step toward a healthy lifestyle. This is the purpose behind Exercise is Medicine™.

Many people see their family doctor as the first line of defense against illness, but these doctors are often not trained in how to use exercise as a treatment. For this reason, it is imperative that the patient gets help from a qualified fitness professional to insure their safety and maximize the benefits of the exercise experience. Without proper guidance, the reluctant exerciser will likely get frustrated or injured and discontinue.

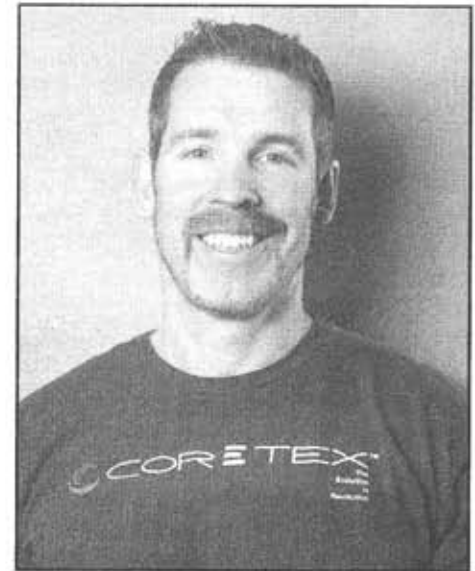
Fitness professionals provide a service along a wide continuum of health needs. Unfortunately, the reality of the fitness industry is that not all fitness professionals are created equally. This has led to hesitancy among many medical providers to refer to fitness professionals. And rightfully so. At one end of the spectrum, some fitness professionals are only qualified to work with already healthy individuals looking for motivation, accountability and variety. At the other end of the spectrum are fitness professionals with graduate degrees, multiple industry certifications and additional training working with special populations. The greater the risk factors a person's health history contains the more qualified their fitness

leader should be.

If you are looking for fitness professionals with advance degrees and certification, you're more likely to find them in private studios or working in conjunction with other medical practitioners. Typically, the big, commercial health clubs are not conducive to working with patients that may have special needs and risk factors.

Bottom line: Let's keep in mind the powerful and necessary cost-effective potential of healthy lifestyles. Preventive healthcare should be considered an investment or personal insurance. For you and me, the choice regarding our health is simple: Either invest a relatively small amount in order to stay in good health, or pay a huge amount later to treat the disease that is bound to eventually hit us. Truly, exercise is medicine—a prescription for better health.

To learn more about Exercise is Medicine™, please visit www.function-first.com. I invite you to try Function First's Semi-Private Workouts completely **FREE** for 2 weeks, no strings attached. Come meet our staff, meet the other members and give us a chance to earn your business. We are extremely passionate about fitness and what it can do in your life, and we want to help you get the most out of your time with us. Let's all enjoy a regular, healthy



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dose of exercise!

About Anthony Carey

Anthony Carey, MA, CSCS, AHFP, CEO and Founder of *Function First*, an exercise studio in Mission Hills, is an internationally renowned biomechanics and corrective exercise expert and a much-respected health and fitness educator as well as an award-winning author, presenter and inventor of the Core-Tex™, and, has worked very closely with the medical community for the last 17 years to help bridge the health gap, connecting the doctor's office and fitness professionals.