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IN HEALTHCARE:

Integrating Exercise Professionals and Health Coaches

OUR POSITION

ACE seeks public policies that position well-qualified exercise professionals and health coaches as members of the patient-centered healthcare team for the prevention, management and treatment of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and other lifestyle-related diseases.

CALL TO ACTION

ACE calls for public policies that recognize well-qualified exercise professionals and health coaches as part of the healthcare team who are equipped to deliver evidence-based programs and interventions for the prevention, treatment and management of chronic diseases. Specifically, ACE advocates for policies that:

- + Establish strict standards for well-qualified exercise professionals and health coaches based on certification programs accredited by respected third-parties, such as the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO)/ American National Standards Institute (ANSI) 17024, so that they may be recognized and trusted as providers of patient interventions as an extension of clinical care.
- + Recognize well-qualified exercise professionals and health coaches as suitable—even optimally equipped—providers of behavioral counseling and preventive wellness programs and services supported by Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance.
- + Establish systems and processes by which physicians and other healthcare professionals may refer patients to evidence-based programs led by well-qualified exercise professionals and health coaches for health-related interventions that are affordable and readily accessible.

WHY

Physical activity is a cornerstone of a more prevention-centered way of caring for the health and wellness of our nation's people. Today, few patients receive physical activity counseling, and even fewer are referred to affordable and evidence-based physical-activity programs.

Certainly, medical professionals see the need to help their patients adopt healthier lifestyles, but they lack the time, training and structural supports necessary to do so on the scale and at the systemic level required.¹

There is an urgent need for team-based approaches to patient care that incorporate affordable, evidence-based prevention and wellness programs, and appropriately qualified and credentialed professionals optimally situated to deliver them, to help translate physical activity recommendations into action. Well-qualified exercise professionals and health coaches are properly suited to lead these programs. It's an efficient way to achieve the behavior changes that will prevent, manage and treat numerous common diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity in our nation's communities.

RESEARCH

1. R.E. Clark, C. McArthur, A. Papaioannou, A.M. Cheung, J. Laprade, L. Lee, R. Jain, L.M. Giangregorio. 2017. "I do not have time. Is there a handout I can use?": combining physicians' needs and behavior change theory to put physical activity evidence into practice. *Osteoporosis International*. Volume 28, Issue 6, Pages 1953-1963.