



Monday, 18 November 2019

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## Referrals to exercise physiologists should be a priority for Australian GPs

The evidence is clear – exercise is medicine for the prevention and management of chronic conditions. Research has shown that a person’s physical activity level is one of the best predictors of health, and yet, many GPs aren’t asking their patients how much they move, much less prescribing exercise.

To help educate doctors and practice nurses as to the importance of exercise for their patients, Exercise Right is once again partnering with Exercise is Medicine® (EIM) Australia for “Exercise Right for Doctors” week.

“Exercise is Medicine® Australia empowers primary healthcare providers to effectively counsel patients about physical activity leading to sustained behaviour change, and promotes evidence based screening to easily identify when and how to refer patients to appropriately trained allied health professionals to deliver exercise treatment services”, says EIM spokesperson, Prof Jeff Coombes.

According to research published in the [Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport](#), medical students enrolled in a five-year medical degree spend an average of just five hours learning about exercise and physical activity. In addition, less than half (46.7%) of all Australian medical degrees teach future doctors about the National Strength Training Guidelines.

It may come as no surprise then that doctors aren’t spending enough time talking to their patients about their activity levels or referring them to an appropriately qualified professional. [One study](#) looking at over 7,000 GPs and over 680,000 patient encounters found that there were less than 619 referrals to exercise physiologists.

This is significant because exercise physiologists are the best placed allied health professionals for prescribing exercise to those living with chronic conditions, and currently, approximately half of all Australians are currently living with a chronic health condition.

“Exercise is one of the most powerful tools for preventing and managing chronic disease”, says Jeff. “Our desire is that through advocacy and education, we can encourage health care providers, with a specific focus on doctors and nurses, to review and assess every patient’s physical activity levels at every visit.”

Throughout this week, Exercise Right is promoting free accredited education for doctors and nurses offered by EIM® Australia. This free online course has been designed highlight the importance of exercise for overall health and introduces subsequent behaviour-change strategies specific to the adoption of exercise as a regular part of their lifestyle. It also highlights the supporting role of Accredited Exercise Physiologists in assisting patients to establish an exercise program best suited to their needs.

The course takes approximately 2 hours to complete and is also eligible for CPD points with the RACGP, APNA and ACRRM. All campaign resources and education can be access through the [Exercise Right website](#).



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## About Exercise Right

Exercise Right is the public awareness vehicle of Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA). Exercise Right aims to inspire and educate all Australians to be healthier and more active. Exercise Right is expertly compiled by professionals and thought leaders in the field, making it a trusted source of information amongst consumers.

## About Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA)

Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA) is the peak professional body for exercise and sports science in Australia. ESSA provides national leadership and advocacy on key issues and supports its members and the community through fostering excellence in professional practice, education and training, and research.

## About Exercise is Medicine® Australia

Exercise is Medicine® (EIM) is a global initiative lead by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM). EIM Australia is managed by Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA). EIM Australia is focused on encouraging health care providers, with a specific focus on doctors, nurses and aboriginal health workers, to review and assess every patient's physical activity levels at every visit. Patients should be counselled on exercise regimens and provided with an exercise prescription or referral to an accredited exercise physiologist, accredited exercise scientist or appropriately qualified allied health professional.