



## Exercise is Medicine™

Most of us in the American Medical Association have believed the above statement for a long time. For many of us the concept is an important part of our professional work, whether in the clinical arena or in mine, the arena of population health (1). But where, you might ask, does the “TM” above come from? It comes from the recently announced new program of the American College of Sports Medicine and a number of associated organizations (the list is in negotiation and development) by that name: Exercise is Medicine™.

As the ACSM states on its website (2):

Our Vision [is] to make physical activity and exercise a standard part of a disease prevention and treatment medical paradigm in the United States. For physical activity to be considered by all healthcare providers as a vital sign in every patient visit, and that patients are effectively counseled and referred as to their physical activity and health needs, thus leading to overall improvement in the public's health and long-term reduction in healthcare cost.

Exercise Is Medicine™ will be a sustainable national initiative that:

1. Creates broad awareness that exercise is indeed medicine.
2. Makes “level of physical activity” a standard vital sign question in each patient visit.
3. Helps physicians and other healthcare providers to become consistently effective in counseling and referring patients as to their physical activity needs.
4. Leads to policy changes in public and private sectors that support physical activity counseling and referrals in clinical settings.

5. Produces an expectation among the public and patients that their healthcare providers should and will ask about and prescribe exercise.
6. *Appropriately* encourages physicians and other healthcare providers to be physically active themselves.

[The] Program Elements are [to]:

- Area 1. Make available tools, training, and referral mechanisms for physicians and other healthcare providers.
- Area 2. Strengthen the science and evidence for the efficacy of exercise prescription in healthcare settings.
- Area 3. Pursue policy interventions that support Exercise is Medicine™.
- Area 4. Stage patient advocacy and marketing campaigns.
- Area 5. Build coalitions and partnerships.
- Area 6. Identify, develop, and disseminate “what works” models for patients as well as entire communities.
- Area 7. Create a website with strategy, content, and functions that support all the program elements of Exercise Is Medicine™.

I hope that you will agree with me that this is a very exciting initiative. It is one in which I happen to have a special interest. This is why I am bringing it to your attention at this time, just as the program, which is being set up for the long-term, is getting underway. I have the honor and the privilege, along with my colleague Edward Phillips, MD, Director of the Harvard Institute of Lifestyle Medicine, to be writing the textbook that will be supporting the program. The book is designed specif-

ically to assist physicians and all health professionals who deal with patients and clients in the realm of regular exercise—and to learn how they can most effectively do that. Our book covers the regular exercise waterfront from mobilizing motivation, which we see as the key element in the whole enterprise, through the nuts and bolts of what to do and how to do it, finishing up with how to have fun as a regular exerciser. We cover in-depth everything from the lifestyle/activities of daily living approach to exercising regularly to the leisure-time scheduled activities/sports approach. Our book will be published in Spring 2009 by Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins.

In the meantime, the project is getting well underway. Some of you may already be aware of it. Many of you of course are members/fellows of the ACSM. But whether you are or not, we encourage you to get involved at one level or another. How do you do that? If you are already directly connected with ACSM, you likely already know how. If not, you can start by going to the EiM™ website: <http://www.exerciseismedicine.org/physicians.htm>.

Welcome aboard! It's going to be a great ride with what so many of us have been working with for so long—promoting exercising regularly to our patients and having it become part of regular medical practice.

Respectfully yours,  
Steven Jonas

### REFERENCES

1. Kindig DA. Understanding population health terminology. *The Milbank Quarterly* 2007; 85(1):139-161.
2. Exercise is Medicine™ Task Force. *About Exercise is Medicine™*. <http://www.exerciseismedicine.org/about.htm> (Feb. 2008).