



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, 20 November 2018

Exercise Right for Doctors – Encouraging GPs to recognise exercise as medicine

The message is simple. Exercise is the best, cheapest and most accessible medicine available, and to improve chronic disease mortality rates, people need to move more. With almost half (44.5%) of Australian adults deemed insufficiently active, it's clear this simple message is getting lost.

To continue promoting the importance of movement on our health, Exercise Right is partnering with Exercise is Medicine[®] Australia to help educate general practitioners (GPs) and practice nurses about the benefits of exercise prescription for chronic disease management through their campaign, **Exercise Right for Doctors**.

With 50% of Australians having at least 1 of 8 common chronic conditions (cancer, cardiovascular disease, mental health, arthritis, back pain, lung disease, asthma, diabetes), and 23% having at least 2 or more, \$467 million is spent on health every day – that's \$19 per person, per day.

Exercise assists with the reduction of risk factors for chronic disease, with 32% of Australia's total disease burden attributed to modifiable risk factors. Physical activity, when suitably prescribed, can help to manage and treat chronic conditions, and can also reduce the impact of mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression.

Despite the countless health benefits of exercise, only 18% of patients receive a physical activity recommendation from their GP. Furthermore, a recent study indicated that GPs are only referring 1.4 patients in every 1,000 to an Accredited Exercise Physiologist.

"Accredited Exercise Physiologists are equipped with the knowledge and skills to design, deliver and evaluate safe and effective exercise interventions for people with chronic medical conditions. This includes diabetes, cancer and cancer treatment recovery, obesity, chronic pain and fatigue, and mental health conditions," says Anita Hobson Powell, ESSA Chief Executive Officer.

"We strongly encourage all doctors to consider the prescription of exercise alongside the prescription of medication, and to refer to an exercise professional, such as an Accredited Exercise Physiologist, where appropriate," adds Ms Hobson-Powell.

By launching the **Exercise Right for Doctors** campaign, Exercise Right aims to:

1. Educate GPs and nurses about the impact of exercise for the prevention, management and treatment of many chronic diseases;
2. Encourage GPs to make a physical activity or exercise assessment and prescription a part of their interaction with every patient on each visit; and
3. Support the referral of patients to appropriately trained allied health professionals to deliver exercise treatment services.



MEDIA RELEASE

“Empowering GPs and nurses with the knowledge and skills to integrate physical activity and exercise into part of standard chronic disease prevention and management has the potential to reach large groups of the community, increase community physical activity levels and reduce healthcare costs,” explains Christina Schmid, Exercise is Medicine Project Officer.

“Over 85% of the population visits a GP at least once a year, so doctors play an important role in reducing chronic disease risk factors. However, we know that most patients aren’t offered advice and support of sufficient intensity to help increase their physical activity.”

Exercise Right is offering doctors and nurses access to free education (online and workshops), as well as a range of resources and factsheets for themselves and their patients, co-written by Exercise is Medicine® Australia.

“We hope that by working together with GPs through this campaign, we can help to reduce Australia’s disease burden through exercise by encouraging patients to move more,” adds Christina.

For further information and **Exercise Right for Doctors** campaign resources, head to the [Exercise Right](#) website.

For more information:

Suari Price

ESSA Marketing and Communications Coordinator

P: 07 3171 3335

E: suari.price@essa.org.au

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. www.exerciseright.com.au

About Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA) and its members

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. www.essa.org.au

About Exercise is Medicine® Australia

[Exercise is Medicine®](#) Australia is focused on encouraging primary healthcare providers to treat physical activity as a vital sign by *reviewing and assessing every patient’s physical activity levels at every visit*. Patients should be counselled on physical activity, and provided with an exercise prescription or referral to appropriately qualified exercise professional.