



## EXERCISE IS MEDICINE: FROM BENCH TO BEDSIDE

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Exercise is a very powerful tool for both the treatment and prevention of chronic disease, for mitigating the harmful effects of obesity, and for lowering mortality rates. In fact, there is a linear relationship between activity level and health status. This association between disease and an inactive and unfit way of life exists in every age group: children, adults, and the elderly. The results of studies consistently show that those who are active and fit are healthier. For this reason, many have suggested that physical inactivity is the major public health problem of our time.

This strong connection between physical activity and health was highlighted in a series of articles that the journal *Lancet* published in 2012. The series reached this conclusion: "In view of the prevalence, global reach, and health effect of physical inactivity, the issue should be appropriately described as pandemic, with far-reaching health, economic, environmental, and social consequences." Can you imagine the public outcry if such strong words had been used to describe a "pandemic" caused by an infectious disease or injury? You can bet there would have been numerous large-scale campaigns mounted and associated publicity to deal with such a pandemic. Unfortunately, the clear identification of the inactivity pandemic in *Lancet* barely generated any media response.

It was for the above reasons that the Exercise Is Medicine (EIM) initiative was established. The stated goal of the EIM initiative is "to make physical activity assessment and exercise prescription a standard part of the disease prevention and treatment paradigm for all patients." This initiative was started by the American College of Sports Medicine in conjunction with the American Medical Association in November 2007. A national launch was held in Washington, DC, that was attended by then US Surgeon General Steve Galson, along with the directors of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and the California Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

In May 2008 the first World Congress on Exercise Is Medicine was held in conjunction with the American College of Sports Medicine's annual meeting to announce the global launch of this program. Since that time, EIM has spread to > 50 countries, including 7 regional centers in North America, Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Australia. It has been interesting to note the worldwide acceptance of the basic tenets of EIM, including recommendations for weekly physical activity to improve health. Most countries have established physical activity guidelines that are essentially the same, suggesting that adults should get 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity each week. It is amazing to have a major public health problem in which almost everyone worldwide agrees on the proper treatment.

### References:

1. Sallis RE. Exercise is medicine and physicians need to prescribe it! *Br J Sports Med.* 2009;43:3–4.
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