

ACTIVATE

2024

An Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA) Publication

MIND OVER MUSCLE

Tackling the mental blocks to exercise

TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE

With powerlifting and strength training

EXERCISE FOR ACTIVE AGEING

Improving health and quality of life

2023 ESSA AWARDS

Meet the winners shaking-up the industry

ACTIVATE

A publication of



Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA) is the nation's leading voice on exercise and sports science. We govern and represent over 9,800 degree-qualified professionals who support Australians to reach their health and performance goals.

Acknowledgement of Country

Exercise & Sports Science Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of lands, seas and waters throughout Australia and pays our respects to Elders past, present and future.

We recognise that the health and social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are grounded in continued connection to culture, country, language and community.

CONTENTS

Letter from the CEO	3
Exercise Right for an active Australia	4
How to find the best exercise for you	7
Mind over muscle: tackling the mental blocks to exercise	12
Exercising with chronic pain	16
Beyond the battlefield: Invictus Australia	20
Exercise for emotional regulation	22
UQ's secret weapon in Australia's paralympic campaign	27
Tahleya Eggers flying the flag for para-athletes	30
Students help rescue rural health	32
Transform your life with powerlifting and strength training	36
Prostate cancer prevention and treatment	40
Mindfulness for endometriosis relief	45
Pacific Island scholarship embraces exercise to beat disease	49
Vision impaired runner on track to complete half-marathon	52
Exercise Right for Active Ageing	55
Habit-forming: how to exercise every day	58
How to see an AEP	62
ESSA 2023 Award Winners	64

A WORD FROM THE CEO



Welcome to a revitalised Activate magazine. This issue marks an exciting chapter for us as we strengthen the connection between ESSA and our public health initiative Exercise Right.

For those new to exercise, Accredited Exercise Physiologist Deanna Niceski shares her tips on how you can find the best exercise on page 7.

In the spirit of competition, page 20 tells the story of Ainsley Hooker and her journey from the Australian Defence Force to competing at the Invictus Games.

And page 27 and 30 profiles two of our sports scientists and the crucial work they're doing with para-athletes ahead of Brisbane 2032.

As the magazine continues to evolve, we invite you to be part of our journey – share your feedback, experiences, and successes with us via marketing@essa.org.au

Yours in health

Danielle Smith
Chief Executive Officer

We are pleased to bring you an annual publication that not only celebrates the success and diversity of our membership, but also empowers Australians to get active.

Our goal is to showcase the incredible work of accredited exercise and sports science professionals in transforming lives and communities. By sharing inspiring stories, practical advice and expert insights, Activate encourages more people to embrace physical activity as the foundation of health and wellbeing and utilise the services of accredited exercise and sports science professionals.

In this issue, we delve deep into exercise physiology, from the challenges in rural communities on page 32 to the achievements of our 2023 award-winning members from page 64.

Editor
RACHEL HARDING

Graphic Designer
DALTON MCDERMOT

Sub-Editor
MILLIE WARD

ESSA P 07 3171 3335 E info@essa.org.au W essa.org.au A Locked Bag 4102, Ascot QLD 4007

EXERCISE RIGHT E hello@exerciseright.com.au W exerciseright.com.au



Disclaimer: Activate contains articles, materials and information prepared by third parties which has been compiled by Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA). It is the relevant author's responsibility to ensure that the content of the author's articles, materials and information is accurate at the time of publication.

The information contained in this magazine is of a general nature only and is no substitute for personalised medical advice. ESSA does not guarantee and accepts no legal liability arising from or connected to any reliance on and interpretation of, any information in this magazine. ESSA does not endorse, warrant or make any representations in relation to, and does not accept any liability in relation to, the goods and services of those third parties referred to in this magazine.

Readers should seek appropriate independent professional advice relevant to their circumstances prior to relying on any information in this magazine.



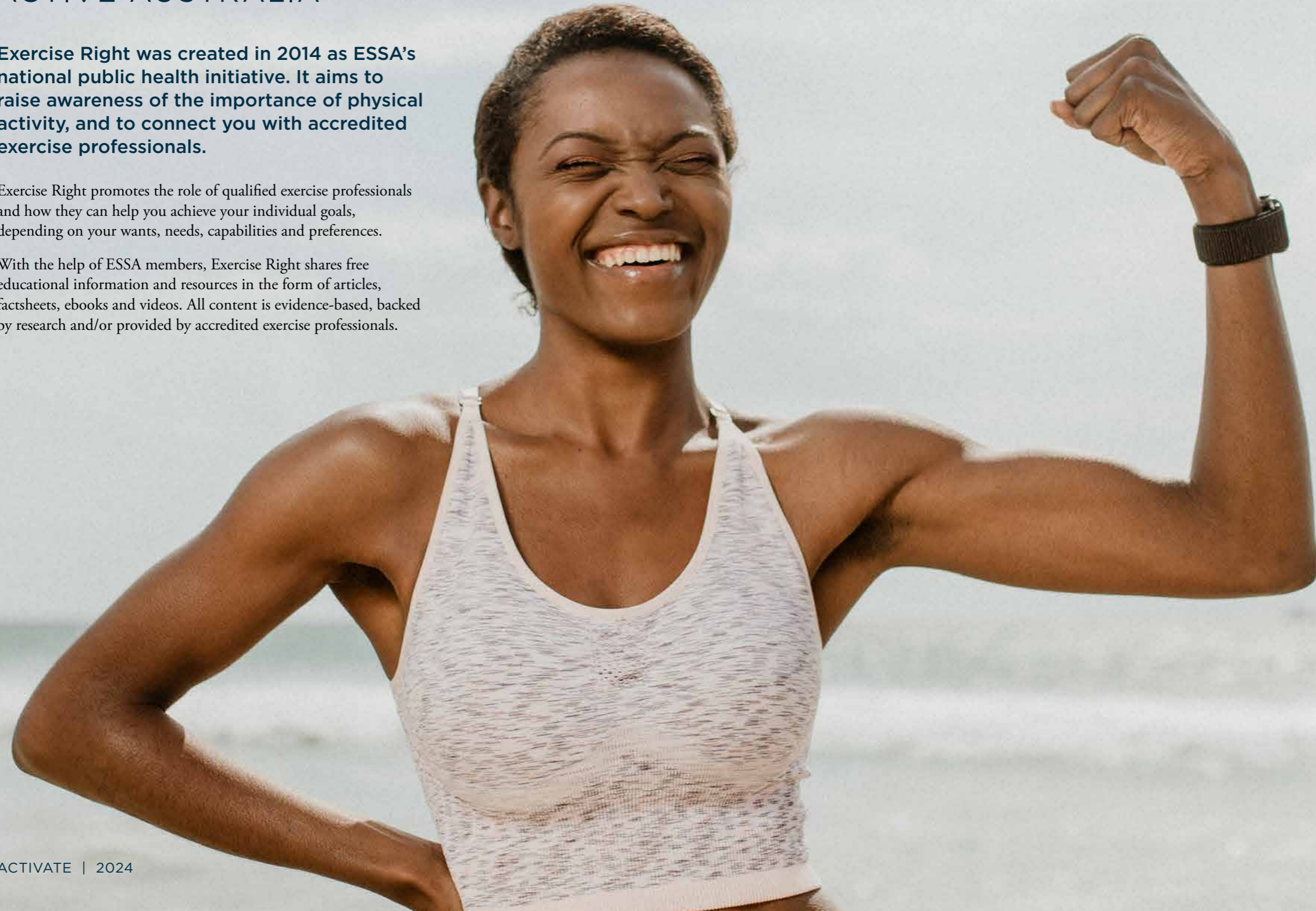
EXERCISE RIGHT

HELPING CREATE A MORE ACTIVE AUSTRALIA

Exercise Right was created in 2014 as ESSA's national public health initiative. It aims to raise awareness of the importance of physical activity, and to connect you with accredited exercise professionals.

Exercise Right promotes the role of qualified exercise professionals and how they can help you achieve your individual goals, depending on your wants, needs, capabilities and preferences.

With the help of ESSA members, Exercise Right shares free educational information and resources in the form of articles, factsheets, ebooks and videos. All content is evidence-based, backed by research and/or provided by accredited exercise professionals.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO 'EXERCISE RIGHT'?

Exercising right for your body is vital for avoiding and managing injuries, improving long-term health and finding exercise you enjoy and can stick with.

The best way to find exercise that works for you is to consult a university-qualified exercise expert, such as an:

ACCREDITED EXERCISE SCIENTIST (AES)

- » University-qualified with at least 140 hours of practical experience.
- » Qualified to develop exercise interventions that improve health and wellbeing and help with health conditions.
- » Often found working in fitness centres, gyms, community health facilities, private practices or clinics.

ACCREDITED EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGIST (AEP)

- » University-qualified with at least 500 hours of practical experience.
- » Qualified to prescribe physical activity for those living with complex health conditions, disabilities, injuries and illnesses.
- » Often found working in public and private hospital settings, aged care, fitness centres, gyms, sporting settings, community health and rehabilitation facilities, private practices or clinics.

ACCREDITED SPORTS SCIENTIST (ASps)

- » University-qualified with at least 360 hours of practical experience.
- » Highly trained in exercise and sports science and qualified to work with individual athletes and sporting teams to help them reach their peak performance.
- » Often found working in sporting institutions or academies, professional sports clubs, national sports organisations, private businesses, schools or state and local sporting teams.

Accredited exercise professionals are here to help you achieve your exercise and health goals.

Find your local accredited exercise professional at exerciseright.com.au

The Exercise Right Impact

Each year, Exercise Right has a national public campaign in May, highlighting the importance of exercising right and promoting the work of accredited exercise professionals.

In 2024, we saw hundreds of ESSA members, supporters and members of the public get involved in the campaign. High-profile supporters such as Snap Fitness, The Push Up Challenge, 10,000 Steps, Fernwood Fitness and Children's Health Queensland helped spread the Exercise Right message and raise awareness of accredited ESSA professionals.

We introduced the Exercise Right Challenge in 2024 and saw thousands of Aussies push themselves to move for 30 minutes a day, for 30 days in May. Our challenge participants each moved for at least 900 minutes in May. Together, we moved for more than 50,000 minutes a day in May – that's over 1.5 million minutes for the whole month!

The campaign brought a significant increase in visits to our Find a Local Accredited Exercise Professional webpage, as well as high engagement on social media and in mainstream media during May.



Our challenge participants each moved for at least **900 minutes** in May. Together, we moved for more than **50,000 minutes** a day in May – that's over **1.5 million minutes** for the whole month!

Join the Exercise Right movement

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Everyday Aussies can get involved in the Exercise Right campaign in May by attending free local events, joining the Exercise Right Challenge, getting involved with their community and connecting with their local accredited exercise professional.

ESSA MEMBERS AND HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

ESSA members and health professionals are encouraged to get involved in the Exercise Right campaign in May by hosting their own free events (such as exercise classes or information sessions), connecting with their community and potential new clients, joining the challenge and promoting the campaign to their networks.

ESSA members can get involved in Exercise Right year-round by contributing educational materials, such as articles and videos, and receiving CPD points in return. To find out more, contact hello@exerciseright.com.au

SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS

Exercise Right works with key supporters and partners to help get more people moving and exercising right with the addition of qualified exercise advice. We welcome new partners and supporters on board regularly. Want to partner with Exercise Right? Contact hello@exerciseright.com.au to discuss how we can work together.



HOW TO FIND THE BEST EXERCISE FOR YOU

Written by Deanna Niceski MCEP, AES, AEP

In the pursuit of a healthier lifestyle, finding the right movement and best exercise for you can be a daunting task. Whether it's battling a lack of motivation, juggling busy schedules, or dealing with physical discomfort, many people face obstacles on their health and fitness journey.

Throughout the ageing process, your need, desire, and vision of what fitness looks like changes. Initially, it might be increasing your cardio health and strength or excelling in a specific sport, driven by external ideals or competitive goals.

With life experience, the focus often shifts towards functional fitness and ability, such as being able to play with or lift kids or grandkids. This means prioritising movement that enhances daily activities, promotes overall wellbeing, and supports long-term health. Instead of solely chasing aesthetic goals or performance metrics, the emphasis often turns to feeling strong, mobile, and capable in everyday life.

The best type of exercise for you changes with your stage of life

As you age and your priorities change, the 'best exercise' for you will look different. The exercise that you enjoyed when you were a teenager is likely different to what you'll enjoy as you age.

Ultimately, it's about finding joy and fulfillment in movement that nourishes both body and mind and aligns with your priorities and values. The best type of exercise for you will depend on your ability, fitness level, interests and overall health. It's important to find exercise that is right for you and not compare yourself to someone else's exercise routine.

Getting started: how to find movement you enjoy

1. UNDERSTANDING COMMON CHALLENGES: WHAT ARE YOUR ROADBLOCKS?

One of the first steps in finding movement that works for you is recognising the challenges you may encounter. Motivation, time constraints, financial concerns, stress, work-life balance issues, pain, and discomfort are common hurdles that many people face.

These challenges can often lead to feelings of frustration, fatigue and uncertainty, making it difficult to stay consistent with an exercise routine.

2. ESTABLISHING YOUR WHY

To overcome these challenges, begin by establishing your “why” and your purpose for wanting to exercise.

Understanding your motivations provides a strong foundation and acts as fuel to keep you going, especially during challenging times. Whether your reason to exercise is to improve overall health, manage stress, enhance athletic performance or improve your mental health, it’s important to clarify your goals to help tailor your exercise approach.

3. TRIAL-AND-ERROR APPROACH

Once you’ve identified your motivations, you can embark on a trial-and-error approach. This involves trying out different types of movement and exercises to find the middle ground of challenge and enjoyment.

It’s essential to strike a balance between pushing yourself for improvement and respecting your body’s limits. Remember, movement should be enjoyable and sustainable in the long run. If you find an exercise you don’t like or that doesn’t feel right for your body, ease off or try something else! Remember, there are hundreds of ways to move your body and it doesn’t have to look like the traditional exercise forms of running, cycling, swimming or weightlifting.

4. IMPORTANCE OF FUN AND ENGAGEMENT

Finding joy and excitement in exercise is crucial for long-term adherence. Engaging in activities you enjoy, whether it’s dancing, hiking, or playing a sport, not only makes exercise more enjoyable but also boosts motivation and consistency. Research suggests that enjoyment and fun play a significant role in sustaining physical activity habits.

5. FLEXIBILITY AND ROUTINE

Balancing flexibility and maintaining a routine is key to a sustainable and effective health and fitness regimen. Flexibility allows for adaptability, enabling you to try new activities, adjust workout intensity, and prevent burnout. It keeps your routine fresh, exciting, and aligned with your evolving interests and goals.

Maintaining a consistent routine provides structure, accountability, and habit formation. It ensures regularity in physical activity, promotes progress tracking, and fosters long-term commitment to your health journey. Striking a balance between flexibility and routine optimises enjoyment, motivation, and overall wellbeing, leading to longer-lasting health benefits!

6. INCORPORATING ALTERNATIVE MOVEMENT

Exploring alternative or non-traditional forms of movement can add variety and excitement to your exercise routine. Whether it’s yoga, dance, martial arts, or outdoor activities, diversifying your movement choices keeps things interesting and prevents boredom.

A helpful tip is to focus on what emotions and feelings you are trying to cultivate and get from the exercise or workout. Is it empowerment, strength, and challenge that fuels your motivation, or is it calmness, creativity, and grounding that you seek in your activities?

By tuning into your emotional needs and aligning them with your fitness pursuits, you can discover a deeper sense of fulfillment and purpose in your wellness journey. It’s not just about the physical benefits; it’s about nurturing your mind, body, and soul through movement and activities that resonate with you on a deeper level.

How exercise professionals can help you find exercise you enjoy

The right exercise professional for you will be able to work with you to identify what exercises do and don’t work for your preferences, needs and abilities.

Accredited Exercise Physiologists (AEP) are best to see if you have an injury, disability, illness or health condition such as diabetes, arthritis, cancer or persisting pain.

Accredited Exercise Scientists (AES) are best to see if you have some experience with exercise and are looking to improve your health, fitness, stamina, strength or overall ability.

Accredited Sports Scientists (ASpS) are best to see if you’re very experienced with exercise and want to reach your peak performance in a chosen activity, sport or exercise.

Find your local exercise professional at: essa.org.au/maps





Celebrate a step in the right direction

Speak to your health professional about our free walking programs today



Scan the QR code for more information



Walking groups



Personal Walking Plans

Terms of use: This material has been developed by the National Heart Foundation of Australia (Heart Foundation) for general information and educational purposes only. It does not constitute medical advice. Please consult your healthcare provider if you have, or suspect you have, a health problem. The information provided is based on evidence available at the time of publication. Please refer to the Heart Foundation website at heartfoundation.org.au for Terms of Use. © 2024 National Heart Foundation of Australia, ABN 98 008 419 761

Proudly supported by

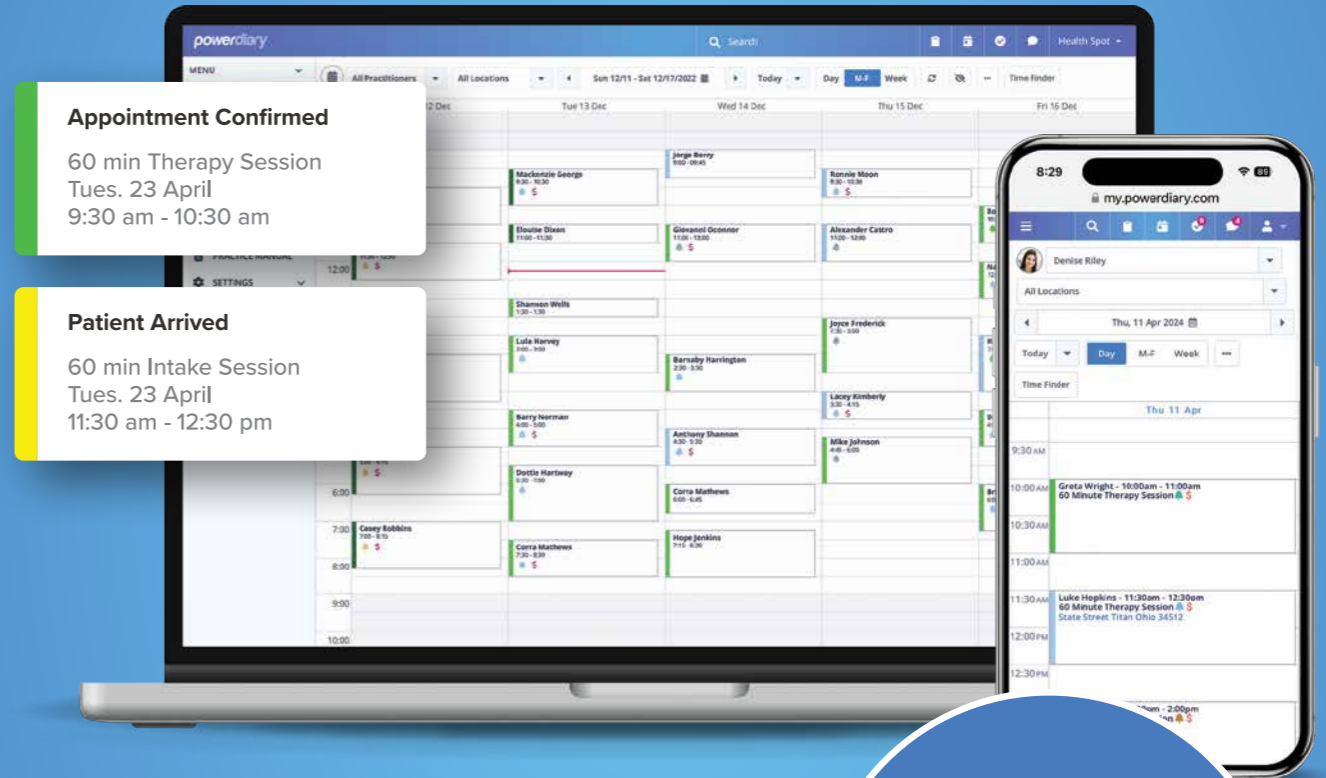


Australian Government



ELEVATE YOUR PRACTICE

With the Ultimate Health Practice Management Software



Appointment Confirmed

60 min Therapy Session
Tues. 23 April
9:30 am - 10:30 am

Patient Arrived

60 min Intake Session
Tues. 23 April
11:30 am - 12:30 pm

START A FREE TRIAL!

TO GET 50% OFF FOR SIX MONTHS!

EVERYTHING YOUR PRACTICE NEEDS:

- ✓ Scheduling & payments
- ✓ Client waitlist & reminders
- ✓ Online forms & bookings
- ✓ Progress notes, letters & reports
- ✓ Practice operations manual
- ✓ In-platform telehealth

The Most **L**oved & Most Secure Practice Management Software

powerdiary.com



MIND OVER MUSCLE: TACKLING THE MENTAL BLOCKS TO EXERCISE



If the benefits of exercise were captured in a pill, everyone would want a prescription.

Moving your body improves nearly every aspect of health. It enhances sleep, strength and mental wellbeing, while reducing the risk of chronic conditions and premature death. What's more, studies show that physical activity has a positive impact even when done in short bursts and with no equipment or gym membership required.

Still, most people don't exercise nearly enough. According to Australia's National Health Survey, three quarters of Aussies fail to meet the recommended physical activity guidelines. Regardless of what the health professions preach, it remains widely difficult to get people to do the thing that is so good for and accessible to them.

Physical limitations and health problems are certainly a factor for many people, as almost half of the population have at least one chronic condition, ranging from arthritis to cancer, diabetes to depression. Modern life is responsible too with long, sedentary workdays and infrastructure that prioritises seated travel and convenience over walking or cycling.

But the biggest barrier that affects all of us is that our brains are wired to avoid exercise.

For most of human existence, being physically active was essential for carrying out the basic functions of life, such as finding and growing food.

But to the uninitiated, the brain is very sensitive to wasted energy. It calculates the effort required to perform an action, asking "is it worth it?". And, while some people succeed in finding exercise they enjoy, they're in the minority, as the abandoned new year's resolutions of late-January would reveal.

But for many people, "is it worth it?" is answered by their autonomic nervous system with a resounding "no". It's possible they may subconsciously harbour negative feelings toward exercise, stemming from an unpleasant childhood experience that can make a person avoid exercise well into adulthood. Or they may see another activity as having more value, such as watching TV.

Sometimes it's also a confidence issue. People who already view themselves as fit and mobile are more likely to stick to regular exercise, while people who perceive themselves as the opposite struggle to find consistent motivation.

These tendencies to preserve energy and safety evolved to stop us from wasting resources on futile endeavours. That is to say, hunter gatherers weren't spending their mornings training for a marathon.

What's more, modern society has been built in such a way that we no longer move much in our day-to-day. In fact, our modern lifestyle allows us to move as little as possible, and we have reached an extreme where that instinct to preserve energy is no longer beneficial to our health.

In fact, physical inactivity has become the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality. While participation in physical activity by generally healthy individuals can be self-directed, Accredited Exercise Physiologists (AEPs) are experts in prescribing effective exercise interventions for people facing barriers to movement. Over the past 20 years, exercise physiology has grown to become an integral part of Australia's healthcare system to prevent and manage consequential chronic illnesses.

They understand that the inner voice that says "I don't want to move" is completely normal and natural. That it takes constant and considerable effort to exercise regularly for health benefits that reveal themselves tentatively over time. They can help the tendency to question "is it worth it?" become easier to silence.

With their extensive knowledge of human behaviour and physiology, they understand that we have traits that typically prefer maximum reward for minimum effort. We take the path of least resistance, stick to familiar routines and remain well within our comfort zones.

Starting an exercise routine means changing all of that, and for what the brain perceives as uncertain results. To keep ourselves safe and comfortable, we typically place more significance on risks rather than rewards, meaning we are even more reluctant to take up physically demanding activities.

So, how do we get ourselves out of this rut? Thankfully, human behaviour is curiously complex, so there are some things we can do to work around this.



SET ACTIONABLE GOALS

Our brains can form long-term goals and ambitions. We've evolved beyond just day-to-day survival; we can now imagine a desirable future scenario, figure out how to achieve it and work toward it.

While there are many variables that play a role in goal-setting, like time constraints, family commitments, body image, ability and mobility, there are also neural processes that discourage exercise, and neural processes that encourage exercise.

Start with small goals, adopt realistic behaviours that fit in your daily and weekly commitments, and build on that progress over time. And do pay attention to the little things that may trigger your tendency to rest, without judgement, to help you to move past them.

The importance of rest is something that is ingrained in our biology and ignoring your body's need to rest can result in even worse things than missing a workout, such as injuries and muscle exhaustion.

REFRAME MOTIVATION

This ability to form goals directly impacts how our brain processes motivation and determination. For one, we are capable of delayed gratification; we can recognise that eating a block of chocolate in front of the TV is enjoyable in the moment, but going to the gym will mean we're stronger, healthier, and more likely to enjoy life in the long term. This requires us to exercise impulse control.

The contrary way to build motivation and control impulses, is to simply recognise all of these ways that your brain sets you up to fail. When people struggle to exercise, society tells them they're not good enough, when in fact, people who do exercise regularly are the ones making an effort to go against their natural instincts.

Rather than dwell in feelings of guilt and shame for not moving enough, replacing your thoughts with ones of self-compassion and an understanding of human behaviour may just be the secret to building that habit.

PERSONALISE YOUR ENJOYMENT

This reframing technique also suggests that you can reframe what constitutes exercise to you. Exercise does not have to be strenuous, difficult or feel like a challenge, and it can instead be simply moving your body in a way that is enjoyable and that feels good for you.

The more you experiment with movement, the time of day you do it, whether you do it alone or with a group, the better you are able to understand and recognise your preferences for movement and take up a regular habit.

You don't need to spend hours lifting weights at the gym to reap health benefits - just moving for a few minutes a day to dance in your kitchen or weed the garden is still great for your mind and body. It's not about overexertion or competitiveness, it's about finding ways to move that feel good and enjoyable to you.

GET A PROFESSIONAL PRESCRIPTION

What's more, there's an entire profession dedicated to helping people move and find exercise they enjoy.

Accredited Exercise Physiologists are the most qualified professionals in Australia to advise you on how to exercise right for you with an individualised exercise prescription. Their tertiary studies in human behaviour and physiology uniquely position them to work with injuries, chronic conditions, disabilities, pain, mental health constraints and much more – you'll be empowered with tools to take action and ignore that part of the brain that tells you to plonk yourself on the couch 24/7.

While the urge to rest is natural, the risks of doing nothing are too extreme to ignore.

Visit exerciseright.com.au to find your local accredited exercise professional.

EXERCISING WITH CHRONIC PAIN



“Start somewhere. Be brave. Ditch traditional ideas of exercise. Get the right help. Build your allied health team.”

Jessica began experiencing chronic pain when she was just 10 years old. She frequently complained of persistent back pain, headaches, and occasional pain in her ankles and wrists.

For years she avoided anything to do with physical activity, using regular medication and passive therapy treatments.

A turning point came when Jessica was introduced to a different treatment approach. She began active therapy, that is, movement and education, which ignited Jessica's interest in understanding her body and pain.

For the first time she felt free of her pain and suffering, and embraced the power of an active, healthy lifestyle.

WHAT IS CHRONIC PAIN?

Living with chronic pain is incredibly challenging, but that did not deter Jessica from not only facing it head-on, she decided to make a career of it to help others too.

As an Accredited Exercise Physiologist (AEP) with lived experience, Jessica knows exactly how debilitating chronic pain can be.

“It can progress to a point where it prevents you from performing daily tasks, sleeping, working, socialising and engaging in any form of physical activity,” she said.

“This puts a lot of chronic pain sufferers at risk of developing other health concerns, like diabetes, mental health conditions, and increases their risk of falls and reduces their functional capacity.”

Chronic pain is defined as ongoing pain that is felt most days of the week for a period of time, generally three to six months or more. It can occur after an injury or surgery, from musculoskeletal conditions like arthritis, or other medical conditions like endometriosis or migraines, and in some cases, there is no apparent physical cause.

It is a common condition, with one in five Australians currently living with chronic pain, but its causes and risk factors are complex. It is influenced by various biological, psychological and sociocultural factors, which make the condition unique to the individual.

PAIN DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULDN'T EXERCISE

Research shows the prevalence of pain is lower among people who exercise regularly, so getting the right support and learning how to manage it and prevent it from worsening can be life changing.

It can be daunting for some with chronic pain to get moving, many are put off because they fear their pain might flare or think they must remove the pain before they can be active.

But as we now understand a lot more about how the body and mind work, physical activity is an effective treatment, particularly in long-term pain management.

For Jessica, she noticed the benefits almost instantly.

“Naturally I started producing more endorphins and endocannabinoids, which are the body’s pain reliever hormones.

“I slept better and had fewer pain flares. And in time I had improved my muscle strength and joint function, which made it easier for me to move.”

“I no longer fear my pain or suffer from it.”

GET ASSESSED AND BUILD CONFIDENCE

There is no ‘one size fits all’ with exercise, especially for those with chronic pain. So, it’s worth getting assessed by an accredited exercise professional before starting your exercise journey.

If you’re eligible, you may be able to access a Chronic Disease Management Plan under Medicare. Visit your GP and ask for a referral to an AEP.

Your AEP will help you develop a baseline level of movement and build confidence, Jessica says.

“The first thing to understand is that there is no magic treatment or exercise that will cure your pain.

“Instead, AEPs focus on learning, reassurance, building pain management skills and gradually exposing you to movement.

“They will work with you to create a personalised movement plan that encourages a sense of trust and safety.

“We shift the focus from ‘exercising to get fit’ to ‘exercising to train the nervous system’. When your brain maps out an exercise plan and you see it through, you feel better about exercise.”

IT’S NOT ABOUT PUSHING THROUGH THE PAIN

Keep in mind that exercising with chronic pain doesn’t mean ignoring the pain and pushing yourself hard.

Rather, work on accepting that you might be uncomfortable when you exercise and focus on the improvement in function – but don’t push yourself to cause your pain to flare.

If you do experience an exacerbation of pain, shift your mindset from ‘I mustn’t do that again because I’ve made my pain worse’, to ‘I just need to build up to that slowly’.

“This might involve doing little but more often, breaking physical activity into tolerable and achievable chunks, with several repeats throughout the day,” advises Jessica.

“You can increase the duration of each chunk as your fitness and activity tolerance increase, and over time gradually build up to longer workouts.”

“But don’t let that approach put you off from doing something to get active now. A little movement is better than none.” Be guided by what you enjoy

Your AEP will take you through a health screening assessment to uncover your medical history and pain story.

This involves identifying your triggers, thresholds and any other tried and tested pain treatments. They will also educate you along the way so you can better understand and manage your pain.

From this, you will be prescribed an exercise plan with achievable goals that account for your capabilities and preferences.

Part of this may involve trying a range of activities to find one or a few that you enjoy and feel confident doing – it’s a process of exploration, self-discovery and empowerment.

“Your progress will be closely monitored, and adjustments can be made along the way if needed,” Jessica says.

“We gradually increase volumes and intensities, exploring what feels safe, and eventually introduce more challenging movements. It’s all part of the journey.”

PREPARING FOR EXERCISE:

SET GOALS. These should be process and action-oriented goals focused on the factors you can control, rather than pain reduction goals which you can’t control.

HAVE A PLAN: 1. Know your baseline, 2. have a pacing plan, and 3. have a flare plan.

IDENTIFY YOUR DIMS AND SIMS. The factors that can amplify your pain (also called ‘dangers in me’ = DIMS), and those that can dampen your pain (so called ‘safety in me = SIMS) can help you to manage your pain more effectively. If you feel an increase in pain after exercise, it could be a combination of different DIMS rather than the exercise itself.

Have a positive approach. Be open and curious to explore movements. While there is no magic cure remember that exercise is one component in your approach to pain management.

DURING EXERCISE:

- Try to relax and breathe through the movement.
- Note changes in pain and keep reassuring yourself ‘sore but safe’.
- To begin with, don’t obsess about the correct form – just move. It can create more tension and alarm the nervous system that the exercise is unsafe.
- Start slow and gradually increase the intensity and volume of exercises.
- Stick to the plan. Do no more on good days, no less on bad days (unless flaring).

AFTER EXERCISE:

- Finish the session with gentle stretches to lower your heart rate, promote relaxation and to activate the parasympathetic nervous system – your ‘rest and digest’ state.
- Reflect on your exercise session and note any factors that may have influenced your pain levels. This includes considering non-exercise factors that might have contributed to a pain flare, such as stress or lack of sleep.

EXERCISING WITH CHRONIC PAIN:

1. Get assessed by an AEP and develop your movement plan.
2. Start with what feels safe. Your AEP will determine some strengthening exercises and cardio-based exercises. Start with only a few repetitions of each to set a baseline.
3. Identify movement patterns you avoid due to pain. Avoiding these patterns for a long time can cause your body’s alarm system to trigger pain more quickly when attempting these movements. Instead, break down these patterns and start exploring them to teach your body they are safe.
4. Try some safe at-home exercises:
 - Walking (land-based or water-based): improves cardiovascular capacity and mobility.
 - Sit to stand: enhances lower limb strength and is functional.
 - Wall push-ups: strengthens upper limbs and improves pushing movement.
 - Calf raises: strengthens the lower limbs.
 - Bicep curls: strengthens the upper limbs.
 - Glute bridge: strengthen glutes and core.

Remember, the journey with chronic pain is unique for each individual, and finding what works best for you is essential. Starting by seeing an AEP is the first step towards managing chronic pain effectively.

About Jessica:

Jessica Ebbersten migrated from Sweden to Australia in 2011 to complete her studies in exercise science. Today she proudly balances her roles as a mother to a three-year-old daughter, owner of exercise physiology clinic Nordica Health Clinic, and working at a private hospital as an Accredited Exercise Physiologist. Her experience living with chronic pain inspired her to help others discover the benefits of an active lifestyle.

BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD



INVICTUS AUSTRALIA'S SPORTING PROGRAMS HELP VETERANS HEAL

Written by Sara Pizzinato, Invictus Australia

The weight of military service can leave lasting marks on veterans. Both mental challenges such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression, plus physical injuries during service can alter the course of a veteran's life, affecting both their overall physical and mental wellbeing.

With the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide finding that three veterans die by suicide every fortnight and cite 'transition out of the military' as both a risk factor and potential solution, the need to offer defence-specific programs is becoming increasingly important. These programs are crucial to protect the wellbeing of current and former serving veterans and their families.

This is where Invictus Australia (IA) comes in, offering a powerful solution: sport. For many former-serving military veterans, sport gives them the opportunity to maintain their physical health while offering a point of connection and camaraderie similar to their time in service. Staying active also allows veterans to maintain their mental health and overall wellbeing.

With each veteran's sport preferences differing, IA offers a multifaceted approach, giving the community a diverse range of activities to choose from. For some veterans, international competitions such as the Warrior and Invictus Games allow sport to act as a motivating force for getting back to being active. For Invictus Games Dusseldorf 2023 competitor Ainsley Hooker, this was the case.

Growing up in Brisbane, Queensland, Ainsley's childhood and early adult life were spent loving all types of sport. She joined the Australian Army in 2007 as a reservist, however soon realised she loved the camaraderie and mateship so decided to transition to full time service shortly after.

Despite enjoying her time in service, a bad ankle injury soon halted her military career. After many failed surgeries, Ainsley was left with chronic pain and a dying foot and ankle. While her love for sport never died, she was left to sit at home in pain, unable to move. After 13 years, she made the decision to amputate, becoming a below-knee amputee. Faced with a barrier to participate in sport, Ainsley searched for alternate ways to stay active to protect her mental wellbeing. It was because of this that Ainsley was introduced to wheelchair rugby, which, in many ways, saved her.

"Being involved in wheelchair rugby has been amazing, the joy and happiness from meeting new people, competing and training has really brought me back from death. I feel alive again and have a new drive to push myself further," says Ainsley.

She applied for the Invictus Games Dusseldorf 2023, delivered in partnership between IA and the Australian Defence Force, to prove to herself that she could use sport to improve her physical and mental health. Her application was successful, and Ainsley went on to represent Australia last year in wheelchair rugby as well as athletics and wheelchair basketball.

Ainsley's overwhelmingly positive experience that helped accelerate her recovery journey mirrors recent research by the Invictus Games Foundation, which found that veterans that prepare for and attend an Invictus Games experience significantly greater positive impacts on their mental and social wellbeing compared to other veterans.

Through this partnership with the Australian Defence Force, Invictus Australia provides veterans like Ainsley the opportunity to compete on a sporting platform that supports recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration into a civilian lifestyle, while showcasing resilience, community,

social connection and friendly competition she felt when she competed with other veterans and was able to replicate the strong bonds often forged during military service.

Available for all veterans and family members, these local sporting events help combat the loss of connection and decline in physical activity many veterans face post-service.

For current serving veterans, it provides an opportunity to forge relationships with their local community, stay connected to the civilian population and relate to people with similar experiences.

For those no longer in the Defence Force, the transition to civilian life can be isolating. IA's local programs help bridge this gap, providing a support system that can be crucial for mental health. With over 10,000 veterans and family member attendees at these local events since Invictus Australia's inception in 2018, veterans like Ainsley across Australia can feel the benefits of sport on both their physical and mental wellbeing.

"Being able to play sports post-service as an amputee was eye-opening and the most amazing experience. Being able to be involved and meet amazing people makes discovering who you are again all worthwhile," says Ainsley.



and purpose. However, places in these teams are limited and short-term. While Ainsley gained a lot from sport on the international stage, when returning home to Townsville, she missed the positive effects sport had on her physical and mental health. This is where IA's community sport arm comes into play.

IA offers a robust network of local sporting events through their Veteran Engagement Managers. These events cater to veterans of all skill levels and abilities, encouraging participation in physical activity and social connection within communities. Ainsley also connected with this stream of work, attending both a bowls and pickleball trial day in her local area. Here, she was able to experience the

Sport at all levels has the power to connect individuals, a concept especially important to veterans who run the risk of isolation post-service. Through this connection, sport acts as a medium to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of the Defence community.

By promoting social connection, fostering resilience, and encouraging healthy lifestyles, IA strengthens communities. Veterans who are physically and mentally well-equipped are better positioned to lead a healthy, long life and contribute positively to society.

EXERCISE THERAPY FOR EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Written by Jade Ellings, AES, AEP



It is well known that exercise improves mental health and is an effective intervention for people living with mental illness.

Generally, exercise professionals prescribe various types of aerobic or resistance-based exercises at a moderate to vigorous intensity with the goal of eliciting improvements in mood, stress and anxiety.

But what if we were to use exercise more creatively to regulate our emotional states? This article explores the concept of using exercise as a therapeutic intervention for acute regulation of emotions.

EMOTIONS: WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Emotions, like many of our body's physiological responses, are an innate part of the human experience and play a vital role in our survival and day-to-day functioning. Emotions provide us information on the state of our environment around us and when activated, cause us to respond, react and act as required.

When it comes to regulating our emotions, we rely heavily on the functioning of two primary systems: the parasympathetic nervous system and the sympathetic nervous system. These two systems work together in harmony to allow us to seamlessly adapt to our environment by up or downregulating our emotions accordingly.

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE AND EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION

When our emotions are at baseline, we call this our 'window of tolerance'. It is within this window of tolerance where the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems work to keep us balanced and regulated across the day, allowing for normal fluctuations in emotions, whilst simultaneously keeping us focused, calm and relaxed.

When our emotions start to become 'dysregulated' we start to move out of our window of tolerance. This is where a dominance from the parasympathetic or the sympathetic nervous system occurs and there is a disruption to the harmonious balance between them. This disruption occurs when certain environmental triggers are perceived by the body as threats to our survival and wellbeing.

To protect ourselves, our nervous system will activate an emotional survival response and move us outside of our window of tolerance into sympathetic dominance or parasympathetic dominance, depending on the emotional response needed. This process is otherwise more commonly known as our flight, fight, freeze or flop response.

Sympathetic Dominance: Fight or Flight

When our sympathetic nervous system is activated, we begin to move into hyperarousal or our fight or flight response. This state refers to being overly aroused or activated in the nervous system. It is characterised by high alertness, increased heart rate and blood pressure and difficulty calming down or relaxing.

Some signs that an individual is hyperaroused or in a state of fight or flight include:

- » Easily startled and hypervigilant
- » Anxiousness or nervousness
- » Chest pain, rapid heartbeat, shallow breathing

- » Agitated or tense
- » Insomnia
- » Decreased appetite
- » Difficulty concentrating
- » Emotional instability

Some mental health conditions are often associated with a sympathetic dominance and hyperarousal:

- » Anxiety disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), phobic disorders.
- » Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD).
- » Borderline personality disorder, histrionic personality disorder, paranoid personality disorder, manic episodes.

Parasympathetic Dominance: Freeze or Flop Response

When our parasympathetic nervous system is activated, we begin to move into hypoarousal or freeze or flop. Hypoarousal refers to a state of being under aroused or activated in the nervous system. Whilst not as common as hyperarousal, if we're feeling sluggish, unmotivated or stuck it might be a sign of parasympathetic dominance.




Some signs that an individual is hypoaroused include:

- » Brain fog or difficulty concentrating
- » Confused
- » Fatigued or lethargic
- » Dissociation or depersonalisation
- » Low motivation
- » Low heart rate, blood pressure or respiration rate
- » Decreased muscle tone and tension
- » Low mood

Some mental health conditions that are often associated with parasympathetic dominance and hypoarousal include:

- » Depression
- » Chronic fatigue, pain or fibromyalgia
- » Schizoid and schizotypal personality disorder

During these states it becomes much harder to regulate our emotions and we often refer to this as emotional dysregulation. When an individual is dysregulated, their own parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems are usually unable to work together to return emotions to baseline and this is where individuals might need to use additional strategies to up or downregulate their nervous systems back to within their window of tolerance (baseline). This is where exercise comes in!

	HYPERAROUSAL The body is in flight or fight. Abnormal state of increased arousal. Driven by the sympathetic nervous system.	» Overwhelmed » Rage » Stressed » Agitated » Tense	» Hyper-vigilant » Irritable » Defensive » Panic
DYSREGULATION + ESCALATION			
	WINDOW OF TOLERANCE Your body can process emotions that allows you to respond effectively, listen and learn.	» Able to deal with challenges » Calm	» Balanced » Relaxed » In control
DYSREGULATION + SHUT DOWN			
	HYPOAROUSAL The body is in freeze or flop. Abnormal state of decreased arousal. Driven by parasympathetic nervous system.	» Paralysed or shutting down » Flat » Numb	» Hopeless » Unmotivated » No energy

Exercise and Regulation: Tips for Exercise Professionals

When it comes to thinking about exercise and regulation, we want to think about how we can prescribe exercise to intentionally regulate the nervous system up and down. The following five recommendations are some simple ways we can use exercise to regulate emotional states:

THINK ABOUT PHYSIOLOGY

Consider the role of exercise on physiological responses like heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate or muscle tension. When someone is hypoaroused, resting heart rate, blood pressure and respiratory rate is slowed, and muscle tension is usually weaker. To move someone into their window of tolerance we can prescribe exercises that specifically activate heart rate, blood pressure and breathing rate and muscle tension to 'up-regulate' the nervous system. Think moderate to high intensity aerobic or resistance training.

On the contrary, when someone is hyperaroused, we know that heart rate, blood pressure and breathing rate is elevated, and muscle tension is tight. To move someone into their window of tolerance we can prescribe exercises that work to slow or control this response to 'down-regulate' the nervous system. Think light intensity yoga, Pilates, stretching, leisurely walks or light resistance training.

If you are unsure, try experimenting with your client to explore how certain exercises make their body feel. You can also support them to check in with their body before exercise and prescribe movement accordingly.

MIND-BODY CONNECTION

Consider how exercise allows us to re-connect with the body. When someone is outside their window of tolerance and is in a dysregulated state, the individual's awareness of their body reduces and a disconnect

between the mind and body occurs. To support someone to regain control and move back into their window of tolerance, consider how we could prescribe resistance training or other body focused movements to target and bring awareness to various body parts. Additionally, dual tasking activities can also be effective to reconnect mind body awareness when dysregulated.

WARM UPS AND COOL DOWNS

Consider how we can use warm ups and cool downs. To ensure that an exercise program is effective, we want to support our clients to be within their window of tolerance before engaging in exercise. If a client comes into their session feeling anxious, stressed or depleted, using a warm up that targets regulation can be a creative way to help a client engage in their subsequent exercises. In the same way, if we find a client is particularly aroused or depleted following an exercise session, consider how the cool down could be used to help them return to their window of tolerance.

INTUITIVE MOVEMENT

Consider keeping exercise flexible and attuned to the client's needs. If a client is in a dysregulated state, but we ignore this, we might find that our exercise prescription induces additional stress, rather than alleviating it. Being able to listen and attune to your client's emotional state and adjusting or changing prescription accordingly can be a valuable tool to increase the effectiveness of an exercise intervention.

WALK AND TALK

Sometimes the simplest interventions are the most effective. If you notice your client isn't their usual self, a simple walk and talk can be all they need. Rather than trying to move them out of their emotional state, walk with them side by side and let them talk. Listen openly, respond supportively and encourage them to "just move".



UQ'S SECRET WEAPON IN AUSTRALIA'S PARALYMPIC CAMPAIGN

This article was originally published by University of Queensland at UQ News.

The deafening sound of metal crashing into metal at speed echoes inside Brisbane's Chandler Arena. Some of the world's best wheelchair rugby players are in a four-a-side training game, slamming with enough force to at times up-end players and their wheelchairs onto the court. On the sideline, and in her element, is Associate Professor Dr Emma Beckman.

"This is my dream job," she beams, motioning toward the blur of players racing up and down the hardwood.

"Seeing Para-athletes at the top of their game is just the best feeling."

The physiologist and sport scientist from The University of Queensland's School of Human Movement and Nutrition Sciences is on secondment in a joint role at the Queensland Academy of Sport (QAS) and Paralympics Australia as Para sport high-performance manager. She is also Vice-President of ESSA's Board of Directors.

"I work with the national programs like the Australian Steelers for wheelchair rugby, and act as a liaison, in support of the QAS program," Dr Beckman said.

"I've been an academic at UQ for 12 years but even before that I'd done a lot of research related to people with a disability and their engagement in sport, physical activity and exercise.

"My passion is understanding how we identify, develop and support Para-athletes, particularly athletes with high support needs.

"Being so hands-on now beautifully aligns with my research background and expertise, and hopefully that's what I can contribute – finding that next generation of Paralympians."

Associate Professor Dr Emma Beckman
Vice President ESSA Board



SPORTS INTEL

The Paris Paralympics will be Dr Beckman's third Games, after attending London and Rio as an international classifier for Para Athletics.

But this time her role will be quite different.

"I'm going over with Paralympics Australia as part of a small group of experts doing on-the-ground sport intelligence data-gathering," Dr Beckman said.

"We're watching everything, seeing how different countries are represented in different sports, how they do things and their dynamics."

"While you can learn a lot from sports results, from data or classification master lists downloaded from websites and potentially even watching YouTube videos of Paralympic performances, nothing beats being there."

Dr Beckman said she's most interested in the Para sports where Australia isn't well-represented.

"Some events and classes we don't even have a competitor, so we want to see what a gold medal performance in that event or class looks like," she said.

"Which countries are competing, what are their athletes' classifications and how many are they taking to the Games?"

"Where are the gaps, where are the small fields – and how can we use that information to identify talent and have a pipeline of athletes for Brisbane 2032 and beyond?"

GETTING IN AT THE GRASSROOTS

Australia is traditionally a strong performer on the Paralympic stage, but Dr Beckman says in the last couple of Games the winner's podium has been more elusive.

"There are a lot of reasons why that can happen, and we know to turn it around we have to be very deliberate," she said.

"Luckily there's been a real uptick in resources, expertise and drive in Paralympic sport to make sure Australia can start to head back up that medal tally.

"There's huge scope for upping our representation in certain sports, as well as across athlete classifications, particularly with gaps in the more severe disabilities."

Dr Beckman said she has a well-declared bias for athletes with high support needs.

"I want anyone with a disability to see themselves in the Paralympic Games, but that can be hard for people with moderate to severe or profound disabilities.

"Early entry into sport for them is a struggle; equipment is expensive, expertise is hard to find and even just getting to a training session can be difficult.

"There are programs like UQ's ParaStart but grassroots participation across Para sport is an area where we need to work harder."

RESEARCH REAPS RESULTS

Dr Beckman said Australia's success in Para sport was testament to industry leaders recognising the importance of research and collaboration.

"UQ is world renowned for research in Para sports, and especially our work in my area of expertise: classification," she said.

"We're one of only three International Paralympic Committee Classification Research and Development centres in the world.

"Classification informs everything in Para sport because you need to understand where an athlete fits into the system.

"Using my classification lens on talent ID and development in this role with QAS and Paralympics Australia has been really helpful."

Dr Beckman works closely with coaching staff, including UQ alum Cameron Lane (Bachelor of Exercise and Sports Sciences '14), strength and conditioning coach for the QAS wheelchair rugby program.

He said ongoing research is crucial.

"As well as sessions in the gym and on court, we do a lot of work in a lab setting, trialling different ways to test and profile our athletes," Mr Lane said.

"We've done stuff around wheelchair setups, VO2 testing, some speed analysis ... we're always looking for what's going to give them the edge."

Earlier this year, UQ and QAS agreed to jointly fund up to eight sports-focused PhD projects, at least one with a Para-specific focus.

GOING FOR GOLD

Three-time Paralympian and Australian Steelers captain Chris Bond is fresh from captaining The University of Queensland side to the top of the table in round two of the Wheelchair Rugby National League - Brisbane Bash.

He's known Dr Beckman since the London 2012 Paralympic Games where the Steelers won their first gold medal.

"As well as in classification, the science side of things in Para sport where Emma works can mean the difference between a gold and silver medal," Mr Bond said.

"How an athlete fits into their equipment or prosthesis is so important, like a car in Formula One – tweak a few things and suddenly they can be a bit faster or stronger."

Mr Bond is eyeing off a third Paralympic gold medal in Paris.

"The Steelers recently regained the position of number one team in the world, so I'm confident we can do it," he said.

"And in my opinion, this is the strongest squad we've ever had."

BRISBANE 2032 AND BEYOND

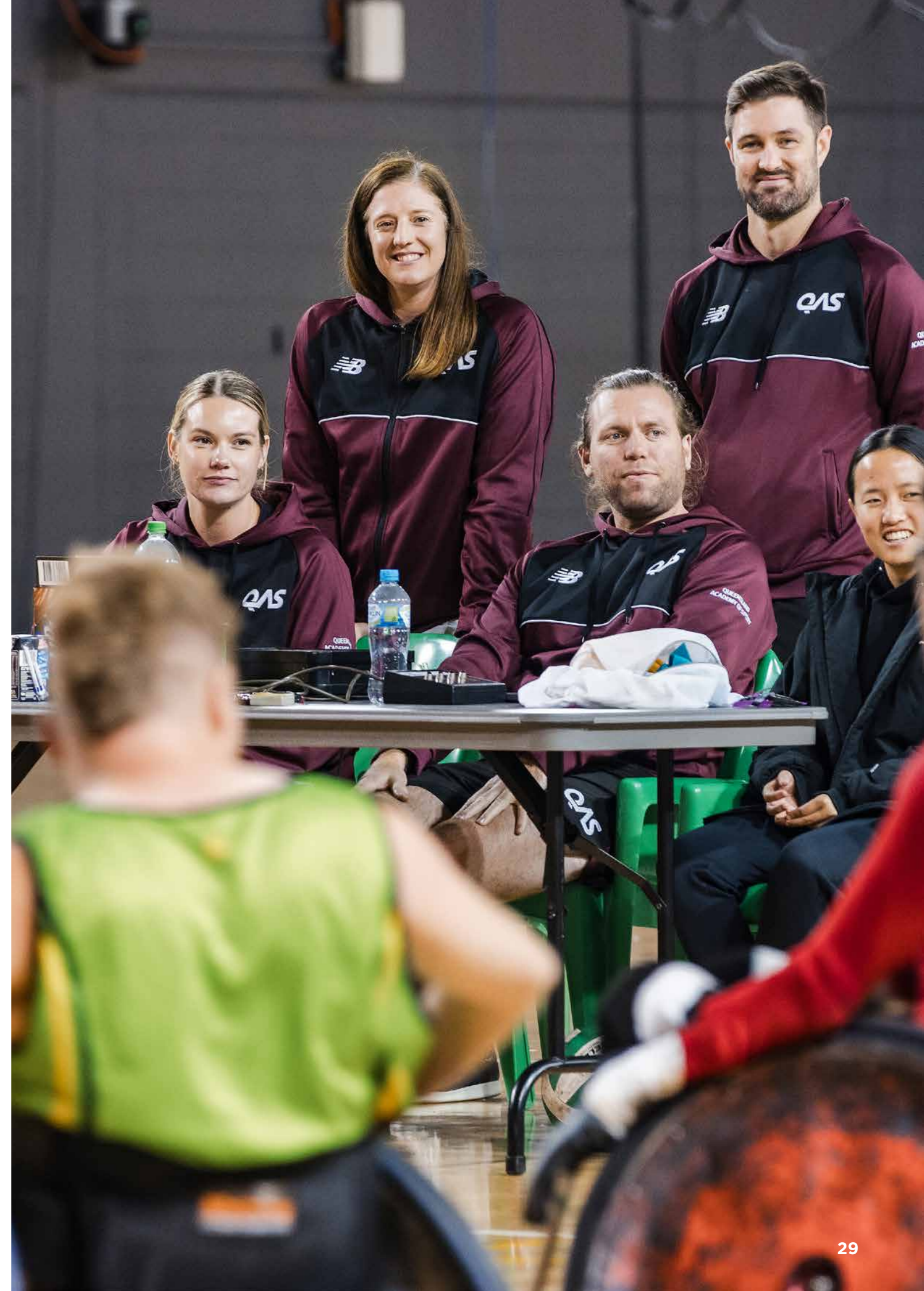
Back at Chandler Arena, Emma Beckman watches as the players cool down after an intense training session.

"I can't wait to see what our athletes will do in Paris," she said.

"A successful Paris Paralympics for me would obviously include a gold medal in wheelchair rugby, but it would also look like a clear plan for the next Paralympic cycle and beyond.

"Taking what we learn in Paris and applying that to LA and then on to Brisbane, to make 2032 the best Games ever.

"And ultimately, to see our Para-athletes performing at their best and doing what they love."



SPORTS SCIENTIST TAHLEYA EGGERS FLYING THE FLAG FOR PARA-ATHLETES



For Tahleya Eggers, being involved in an athlete's unique journey to success is always special.

As an Accredited Sports Scientist at the Queensland Academy of Sport (QAS), one of her career highlights has been helping Para-athletes reach new heights, particularly in the state's wheelchair rugby team.

With Brisbane gearing up to host the 2032 Olympics and Paralympics, she's looking forward to more opportunities for Australia's Para-athletes.

"Working with Para-athletes, there is so much to learn and so much opportunity to contribute," she says.

"There are consistently new questions and I feel like I am in such a special position that I get the opportunity to try and use my expertise to answer these.

"Working in this environment, I have to really push myself to understand the mechanisms of 'why' things are happening. There is also the space to be creative because the most commonly applied principles aren't always relevant for these athletes, and it is never a 'one size fits all approach'.

"As a team, we are focused on working as collaboratively as possible to ensure that a holistic approach is provided for athletes to achieve their respective goals."

Tahleya, who also works with able-bodied athletes, hadn't worked with Para-athletes before starting at QAS, but loves being involved.

The athletes she works with are at various stages of their sporting journey, from senior athletes representing the country to junior and developing athletes beginning their high-performance careers.

Her key roles include physically profiling athletes to determine traits such as aerobic capacity, speed and agility to help inform training goals and optimise athletic performance. She is involved in the delivery of conditioning sessions that aim to develop various physiological traits and facilitate adaptation.

"Doing impactful work is so important to me and I'm energised by the fact that there is so much opportunity to make an impact in these programs that hopefully leads to the athlete's ongoing success," she says.

"I now feel inspired to support and develop the presence of sports science in this environment.

"We currently have a few projects in the pipeline aimed at better understanding physiological responses and mechanical demands of wheelchair team sports. It's a great challenge and opportunity to conduct research that has a direct impact on practice."

Regardless of whether you're able-bodied or not, Tahleya believes training and competing in sports has numerous physical health benefits, but also many social and mental health benefits.

"Being a part of sport fosters a sense of community. It allows people to develop friendships, to bring likeminded people together,"

"It provides people with an outlet to challenge themselves and determine what they are capable of. To learn new skills, to achieve goals, to experience success and learn to deal with setbacks.

"Given that many people with a disability have experienced and overcome challenges outside of sport, I feel like they have so much to contribute to the broader sporting community."

With this in mind, Tahleya says more could be done to support Para-sports.

"Para-sports need to be supported and recognised continuously across the full Paralympic cycle to ensure there is longevity in the programs.

"Para-athletes and coaches need to be engaged in the conversation. The best people to adequately articulate the barriers in this space are those directly involved and impacted by the processes and outcomes."

Australia loves to engage with sport of all kinds, as was evident with the Matildas during the 2023 World Cup.

"Off the back of the Matildas success, women's sport in Australia has now seen such a boost and I believe that given the right opportunity Para-sport could achieve the same.

"'You can't be what you can't see' is a phrase that has gained traction recently in sporting contexts and I believe it's relevant here as well. People with disabilities may not know the breadth of options available to them without being exposed to those options.

"There needs to be access to and subsequent engagement with these sports in the media to increase the number of people attending matches, watching games online and following on socials.

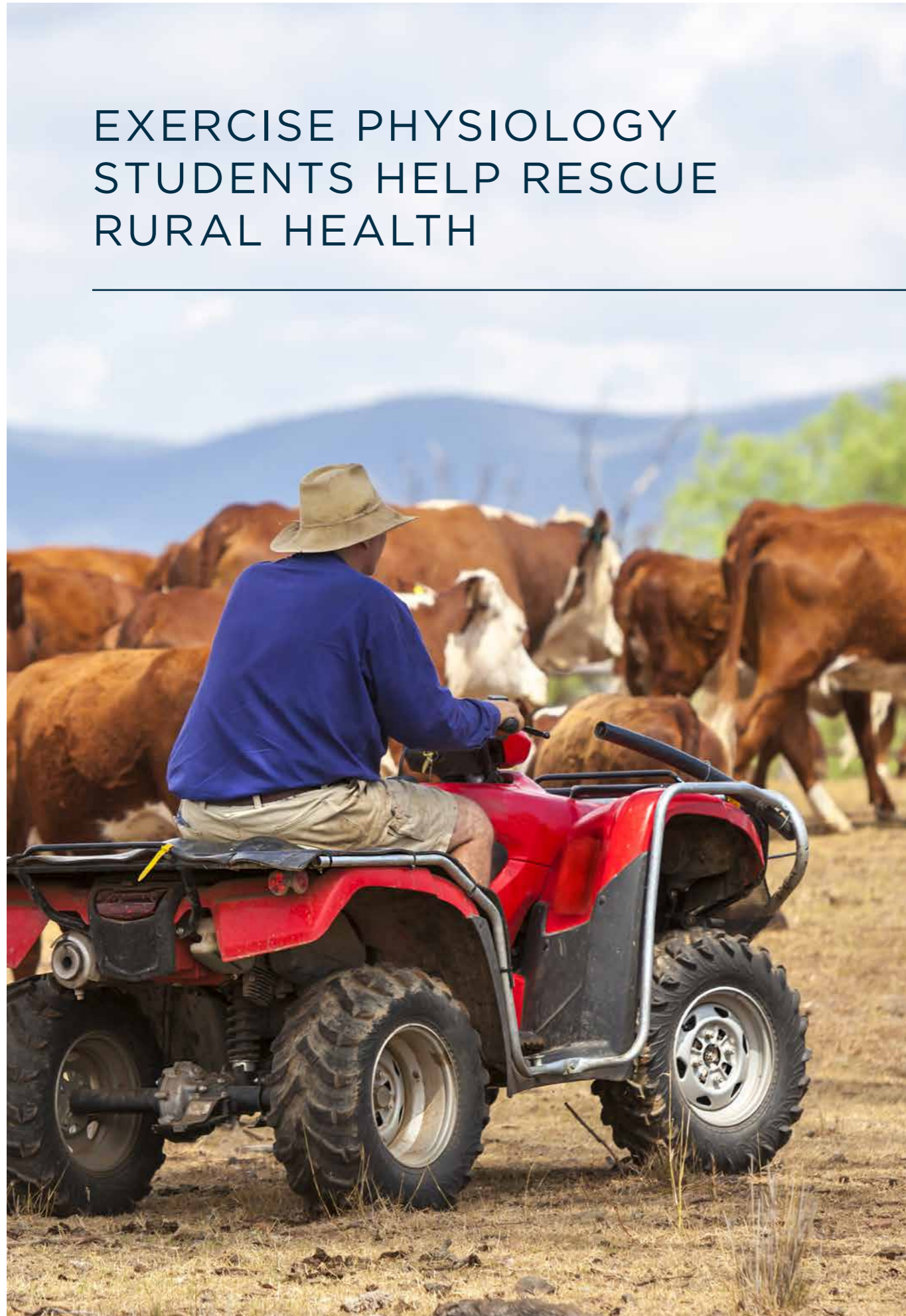
"The more demand there is for sports the better sponsorship and potential for boosted resourcing.

"The Paralympics are fantastic opportunities for the public to engage with high-performing elite athletes and experience athletic feats across an even wider range of sporting pursuits.

"There is the opportunity to build a strong Para-sport presence in Australia over the next eight years, and the potential to reap the benefits in 2032 by being able to showcase even more and better supported athletes."

"The availability for people with disabilities to engage in sports earlier in both competitive and social contexts could enhance someone's quality of life and lead to finding a champion athlete of the future."

EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY STUDENTS HELP RESCUE RURAL HEALTH



Living in rural and remote Australia means facing healthcare challenges that those in urban areas often take for granted.

These regions urgently need more medical services but are constantly grappling with severe workforce shortages.

Residents in rural communities have fewer cancer screenings and more chronic health issues, leading to greater rates of chronic disease and lower life expectancy. This healthcare scarcity makes it tough for people to settle and thrive in the regions, holding back progress for local communities.

So, how can we bridge this gap and better address the health needs of our rural communities?

One promising solution is integrating exercise physiology student placements into these under-served areas.

Students get hands-on experience while providing much-needed care, creating a sustainable, mutually beneficial system.

This approach can drive real change, ensuring everyone, no matter where they live, gets the care they deserve.

THE SUCCESS OF RURAL PLACEMENTS

For James Cook University Practicum Supervisor Kirsten Russell, filling gaps in rural health services through student placements is a win-win where students are exposed to unique learning advantages in these regions while the community gains access to valuable services.

“We’re often challenging the perception of what exercise physiologists can do,” Kirsten said.

“More and more students choose to relocate to rural areas because the work allows them to see and do so much more than they might do in the major cities.”

Over the past 12 years, Kirsten has witnessed a transformation of students relocating to rural areas after placements that showcased new lifestyle and career opportunities to them. These experiences have made exercise physiologists more willing to relocate to these areas and we are seeing the allied health network grow.

“At the time I graduated in the early 2010s, exercise physiology was virtually unknown in Western Queensland, and I had to navigate the complexities of integrating the profession into the rural and remote workforce.”

The unique skillset of an Accredited Exercise Physiologist (AEP) in this case makes them key players in minimising and treating chronic diseases and reducing early mortality rates of underserved regions, and forms a scope of practice akin to a ‘rural generalist’.

This role is one that AEPs are qualified to do, but is not typically seen in metropolitan areas.



Roma – Queensland, Australia

“It’s common for people to think all we do is exercise but there is a lot more to our knowledge and skills than that,” Kirsten said.

“Exercise physiologists have advanced skills in behaviour change, holistic health and exercise prescription, because for an individual to be able to engage in exercise, they first must have their foundational needs met.

“For many people that present to us, they cannot engage in exercise until their psychological needs are met.”

A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE WITH COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

Living and working in rural locations gives students a unique opportunity to truly become part of the community where they are based.

“Students value the chance to work in culturally diverse settings, and learn first-hand about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare.”

They become motivated to develop their soft skills by reflecting on and adapting their verbal and non-verbal communication skills to ensure a cooperative practice for both clients and students.

“The whole town and community get to know us and trust us, which removes any barriers that may initially prevent people from accessing our services,” Kirsten said.

What’s more, the clients become actively involved in the student learning process, and take on a level of responsibility, contributing to a holistic and cooperative healthcare strategy.

This not only empowers clients in managing their health but also enriches the educational experience for students, providing them with a deeper understanding of community dynamics and healthcare needs.

EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGISTS CAN ADDRESS THE HEALTH DISPARITY

For many patients in rural and remote communities, they may present to an AEP thinking they have one issue, but they’re often dealing with multiple health concerns. Exercise physiologists help uncover these underlying issues.

In the rural setting, exercise physiologists don’t work independently and often work in multidisciplinary ways. They form partnerships with community stakeholders to deliver services where resources are scarce.

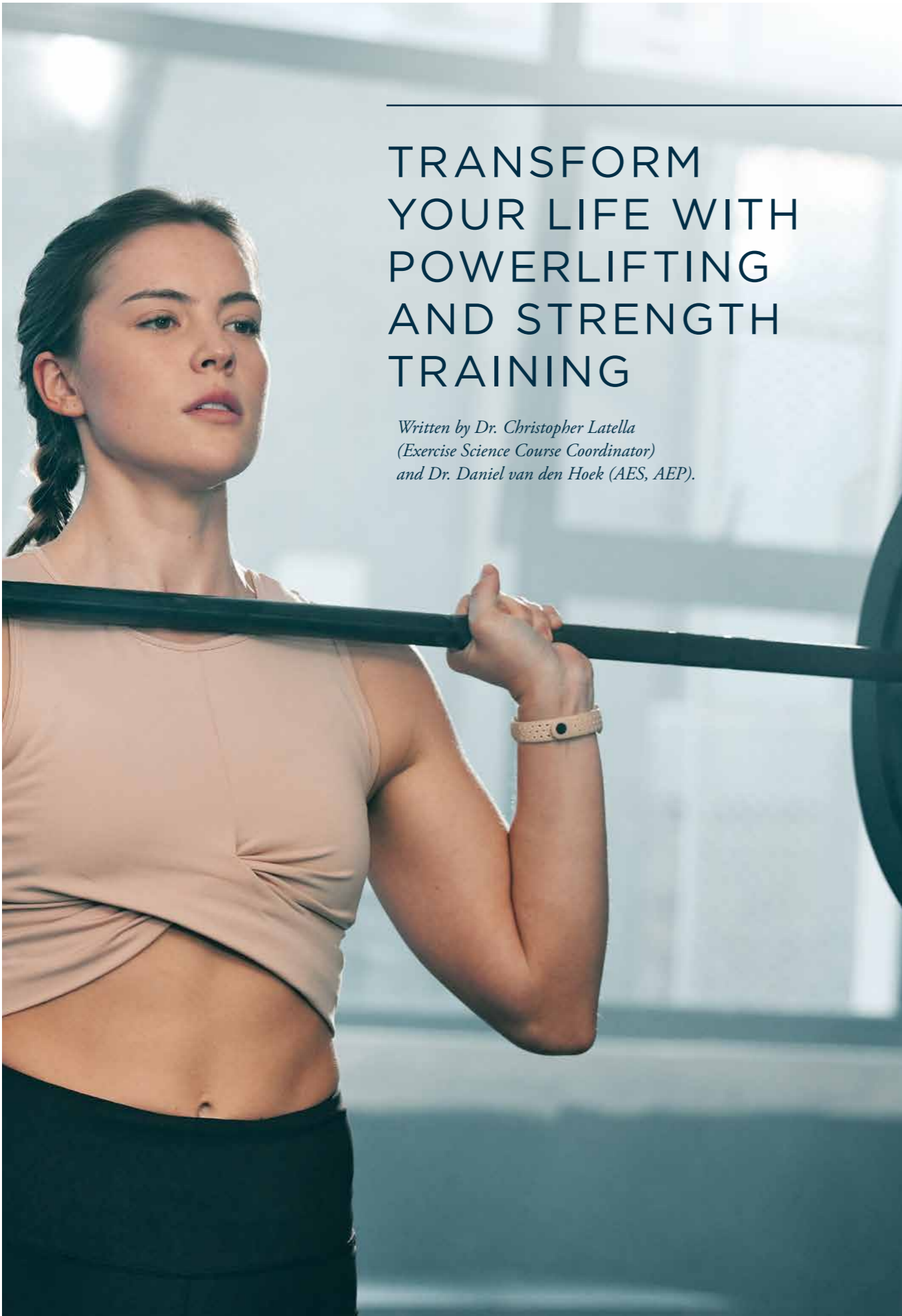
“We determine the gaps faced by the community, but the interventions may be less orthodox than the typical AEP approach,” said Kirsten.

“We use behaviour change and activity-based interventions to build their resilience before we engage them in regular exercise, and lot of the time we are applying evidence-based best practice with limited resources.”

This approach focuses on the bidirectional relationship between physical and mental health.

“Exercise then provides them with an accessible entry-point to understanding mental wellbeing,”

“Although the work can be intense and challenging, it’s quite satisfying to come together with community groups and other stakeholders and use unconventional methods to solve the unique health issues facing our rural communities.”



TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE WITH POWERLIFTING AND STRENGTH TRAINING

*Written by Dr. Christopher Latella
(Exercise Science Course Coordinator)
and Dr. Daniel van den Hoek (AES, AEP).*

Strength training is quickly becoming a much more popular form of exercise than it was ten, or even five years ago. A big reason for this popularity is the rise of strength training on social media and an increase in awareness of the benefits of strength training.

Studies have shown that muscle strength is an important predictor of health and mortality risk. Poor muscle strength in older adults can often cause falls, injuries and poor overall health, resulting in huge global healthcare and financial burdens.

However, it's not just older adults who are affected, with poor strength becoming recognised as a risk factor in young adult health as well. In school-aged youth, strength training has been shown to positively affect mental and academic performance, suggesting that it should be further promoted and adopted by people at all stages of their life.

NEW TO STRENGTH TRAINING? HERE'S A FEW REASONS TO GIVE IT A GO...

Strength and resistance training are crucial to your overall long-term health, especially your muscles and bones. As we age, loss of muscle can lead to falls and put everyday activities, such as housework, out of reach.

On top of building muscle, strength training can increase your endurance and improve your blood pressure and bone health. Strength training can look like lifting weights or powerlifting, using resistance bands, or doing bodyweight strength exercises like squats or sit-ups

Read more about the benefits of strength training at exerciseright.com.au

So, if strength training is good for us, why aren't more people doing it? Despite the benefits of strength training, less than 36% of Australians aged 18 or older get the recommended amount of strength training.

This drops to only 20% in adults aged 55-64 years. So, why aren't more Aussies strength training?

Often, strength training is perceived as intimidating, difficult to do properly or only for hardcore gym fanatics. However, strength training has many health benefits and there are more ways to get involved than you think (such as 'powerlifting'—more on this later), and the good news is people of all ages are taking part!

HOW TO EXERCISE RIGHT WITH STRENGTH TRAINING

Whether you're brand new to strength training or are getting back into it after taking some time off, it's best to start off slow and only with the basic movements before using weights, machines or resistance tools.

Once you feel more confident, you can progress to kettlebells, machines, dumbbells and barbells where comfortable.

If you're unsure, the best way to exercise correctly and safely with strength training is to chat to an Accredited Exercise Scientist or Accredited Exercise Physiologist to ensure your form and weight range is correct and that you're doing everything possible to avoid injury or exhaustion.

WHAT IS POWERLIFTING?

Powerlifting is a strength-based competitive sport centred around lifting the most weight you can in three movements: the squat, bench press and deadlift. Powerlifting started in the 1960s, and the sport has recently grown rapidly as more people begin to participate. In fact, in the last decade there has been almost an eight-fold increase in competitors in Australia alone.

Competitors are separated into gender, age, and weight categories. Typically, the individual in each category who lifts the highest summative score of the three lifts is deemed the winner (i.e., best squat + best bench press + best deadlift = total score). Competitor ages can range from as young as 12 to 80 plus in many countries.

Anyone can give powerlifting a go, there are no obligations to compete and almost anyone can get involved!

ANY AGE AND ANY GENDER

There is no age limit or gender limitations to powerlifting. Some clubs even focus primarily on older adults, such as the Real Strength training facility in Victoria who focus on training individuals over 55. The world record for the oldest competitive powerlifter was set in 2021 by Edith Murway-Traina at 100 years of age!

ALL ABILITIES

Powerlifting is open to individuals of varying abilities.

The International Powerlifting Federation supports competitors with intellectual disabilities through Special Olympic pathways. Additionally, individuals with congenital issues or acquired injuries that affect physical function can also compete in Para Powerlifting (a modified version of the sport where competitors compete in the bench press discipline).

Low injury risk: Compared to other common sports, injury occurrence in powerlifting is 3-15 times lower. Due to the controlled nature of the sport, injury risk can be largely reduced with proper coaching instruction, training programming and progression over time.

POWERLIFTING BENEFITS

Powerlifting provides a range of physical and mental health benefits. Powerlifting can help individuals meet strength training guidelines, develop healthy lifestyle habits, improve overall health, increase muscle mass and function well into old age. It's a great tool for prolonged muscle strength and endurance and can significantly help people avoid falls and injuries as they age.

Despite being an individual sporting activity, many powerlifting training facilities form close knit communities where people of all walks of life come together to train and/or compete, helping support social connection and improved mental wellbeing. A recent systematic review identified resistance training as a highly effective exercise strategy to manage symptoms of depression and anxiety.

TOP TIP FOR POWERLIFTING: SEEK QUALIFIED GUIDANCE

Before beginning any new exercise or engaging in exercise that you're not quite sure about, it's a great idea to chat to an accredited exercise professional, such as an Accredited Exercise Physiologist especially if you have a disability, health problem, injury or any concerns about exercising.

These allied health professionals are trained to help you exercise right for your goals, ability, health condition, fitness level, wants and needs.

Find your local accredited exercise professional at exerciseright.com.au

Below:

Melbourne, Australia 2024: Asia Pacific Powerlifting Championships, Aaron Hollenback (AUS) performing squat exercise with 190kg barbell in Y14-18 age group.

Benefits of Powerlifting:

1. Powerlifting is often overlooked due to it being perceived as lifting incredibly heavy weight, but it may be well within your reach.
2. Powerlifting athletes typically improve strength by 7.5-12.5% in the first 12 months.
3. Powerlifting training groups/communities are evidently great for a sense of community, camaraderie and improved self-esteem and mental health.
4. Para-powerlifting is a booming sport for clients with varying abilities or paraplegic clients, depending on their goals.
5. Don't be deterred by the potential injury risk of powerlifting. Powerlifting has a lower injury risk per 1000 hours of participation compared to other sports like soccer.





THE ROLE OF EXERCISE IN PROSTATE CANCER PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

Written by ESSA in collaboration with Adam Luther AEP

Prostate cancer was the most diagnosed cancer for men in Australia in 2023 with over 25,000 cases diagnosed during the year.

While the prostate cancer survival rate is high (average five-year survival rate of 96%) when compared to other cancers, prostate cancer incidence rates are known to be more volatile and unpredictable than any other cancer.

Prostate cancer is characterised by the uncontrollable rate of cell growth within the prostate that has the potential to spread to other parts of the body.

THE GOOD NEWS

Exercise has been proven to help prevent and delay the onset of prostate cancer and support patients during cancer treatment across the board.

But before we get into the important role of exercise in prostate cancer, it's important to note that cancer can affect people differently and not everyone will have the same experience, ability or side effects.

For many people with cancer, exercise can be completely out of reach and even small movements or short workouts are not possible, especially when undergoing treatment.

There are other tools that don't require movement and have been proven to reduce symptoms of stress and anxiety during treatment for both cancer patients and caregivers, such as breathwork.

THE ROLE OF EXERCISE IN PREVENTING CANCER

Regular exercise can help prevent cancer by reducing inflammation in the body, managing weight, boosting the immune system, improving longevity and enhancing overall health for the long-term.

You might be wondering; is exercise actually safe for people with cancer?

Safety can be a key concern for patients and families when dealing with cancer. Research shows that individualised exercise prescription offers both short and long-term health benefits, with minimal risk to people with cancer. Physical activity in cancer patients isn't just about managing symptoms; it's about reclaiming control over the patient's ability and independence.

Exercise can be a vital component in the comprehensive management of cancer and is a useful tool that shouldn't be overlooked.

THE ROLE OF EXERCISE IN PROSTATE CANCER TREATMENT

Exercise has been proven to be a safe and effective tool in the treatment of prostate cancer. Exercise and the effects of exercise on the body help reduce the number and severity of treatment-related side effects and symptoms, such as fatigue, muscle loss, function decline and anxiety and depression.

Evidence shows that prostate cancer patients with higher energy expenditure experience a lower rate of death from prostate cancer and from general mortality causes overall.

In addition, being physically active can help to manage the symptoms of Androgen Deprivation Therapy (ADT), which is a common treatment method for prostate cancer.

Exercise can also help cancer patients to better tolerate treatment. For certain types of cancer treatment, higher physical activity is linked with a better ability of tolerating higher-intensity treatment doses. This means that exercise may allow patients to receive and tolerate a greater percentage of their outlined cancer treatment plan.

Additionally, too much time spent sitting or resting before, during and after cancer treatment can cause loss of body function, loss of muscle mass, reduced range of motion and increased muscle weakness.

So, whether you have cancer or are at risk of developing cancer it's best to start exercising sooner rather than later.

WHO TO TURN TO FOR EXERCISE HELP

Did you know Accredited Exercise Physiologists (AEPs) are trained to work with people living with cancer?

If you're at risk of getting cancer, have been diagnosed with cancer or are a cancer survivor, an individualised approach should be taken when exercising to help you meet your specific needs.

An AEP is the person to go to make sure you're exercising right for your ability and condition and to receive a personalised exercise program that suits you.

Find your local accredited exercise professional at exerciseright.com.au today.



NEW

Resources for Exercise Physiologists Now Available

- ✓ New exercise recommendations to support the management of osteoporosis
Includes evidence-based exercise prescription for osteoporosis and special considerations
- ✓ Consumer factsheets
Explaining a range of medical conditions and how they impact bone health


PROTECTING BONE HEALTH IN THE COMMUNITY



VISIT NOW

HEALTHY BONES
AUSTRALIA

<https://healthybonesaustralia.org.au/health-care-professionals/physiotherapists-and-exercise-physiologists>



MINDFULNESS OFFERS NEW HOPE FOR ENDOMETRIOSIS RELIEF

Painting, gardening, and finding your 'zen' could offer new hope for endometriosis sufferers, reducing surgery rates and enhancing long-term pain management.

In Australia, endometriosis affects at least one in seven women. Endometriosis or 'endo' is a progressive, chronic and incurable condition of the female reproductive system. Over the past decade, the rate of hospitalisations for the condition has doubled among women aged 20-24.

Accredited Exercise Physiologist and Director of Pear Exercise Physiology Esme Soan said there has been a positive shift in patients using exercise and mindfulness as medicine to manage their pain.

"The severity of endometriosis-related pain isn't always linked to the size or number of lesions. Many sufferers find that pain persists even after surgical removal of endometriosis or hormonal treatments," said Esme.

"This persistence can be attributed to changes in the nervous system, including the brain, spinal cord, and nerves, explaining why traditional treatments often fall short in providing relief.

"Calming your nervous system by painting, walking in nature, or meditating can play a big part in ongoing pain management."

Esme's Brisbane exercise physiology clinic has seen an increase in patients turning to exercise and mindfulness for long-term support and treatment.

"Using exercise that is individualised to your mind and body is so important," she said.

"Combining mindfulness practices with exercise can really boost mental health and pain management, and reduce inflammation and flaring associated with the condition.

“Learning how to relax the muscles and calm the nervous system can really improve your quality of life.

“Everyone is unique in their endo experience, so it’s important to strengthen your mind-body connection and learn how to tune into your physiological needs. Even if you no longer experience a regular bleed, the more you learn how to work with your cycle rhythms and fluctuations, the better we can support your body.

“It’s so important to work with your AEP on what works best for your long-term pain management.”

Endometriosis is a gynaecological condition where ‘endometrial-like tissue’ grows outside the uterine cavity, usually around the pelvis. It is known as ‘endometrial-like tissue’, as it is not identical to the cells found within the uterus, however it shares multiple similarities.

To maintain health, women and other individuals with endometriosis should aim for moderate-intensity physical activity, enough to “huff and puff”.

But if you’re currently sedentary or exercise irregularly, start with short sessions (less than 20 minutes) of low to moderate intensity and gradually increase the duration and/or intensity.

If you’re unsure, get support from qualified health professionals like an Accredited Exercise Physiologist. They will assist with starting and sticking to a safe and effective exercise program.

Exercising with endo

PELVIC FLOOR STRENGTHENING

- » Clams
- » Bird dog (alternating arm and leg)
- » Glute bridges
- » Side lying leg raises
- » Diaphragmatic breathing

LOW IMPACT EXERCISE

- » Yoga
- » Walking
- » Swimming
- » Cycling

PRACTICE MINDFUL MOVEMENT

- » Set an intention
- » Use your breath as a guide
- » Focus on one sensation at a time
- » Practice gratitude
- » Be kind to yourself

HIGH-IMPACT EXERCISE

- » Avoid intense abdominal exercises, such as crunches
- » Avoid intense exercise such as running, burpees and box jumps

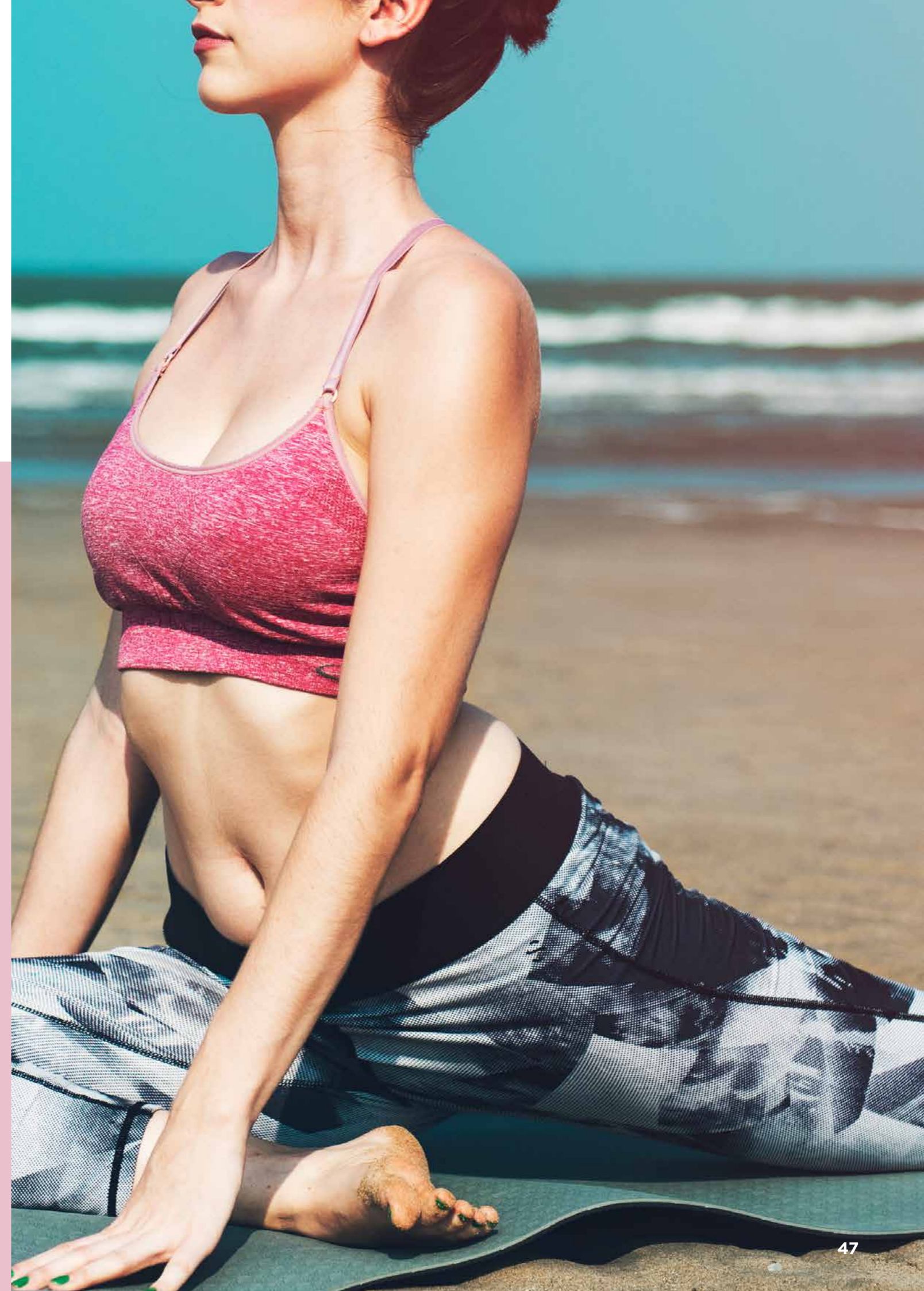
EXERCISING AFTER DIAGNOSIS

- » Reconsider your approach to exercise following your endo diagnosis
- » Consult an exercise professional for qualified advice to ensure the exercise you’re doing is safe and beneficial for your condition

What can a women’s health Accredited Exercise Physiologist help with?

Exercise physiologists study the effect of exercise on the body, the mechanisms by which exercise can reduce or reverse disease, support optimal health and aid in recovery. With specialisation in women’s health, exercise physiologists can help with:

- » Leaking of urine when you cough, laugh, sneeze, exercise, or feel desperate to run to the loo!
- » Exercises to do after having a baby, having cancer, having surgery or experiencing pain during exercise.
- » Concerns about your pelvic floor, including feeling heaviness in your pelvis, or pain during sex.
- » Conditions like EDS/hypermobility, POTS, chronic fatigue endometriosis or fibromyalgia.
- » Conditions like pelvic organ prolapse (POP) and wanting to exercise safely (yes - you can exercise with POP - when done safely, it’s one of the best things you can do).
- » Post-hysterectomy, laparoscopy or mastectomy surgery and wanting support in rehabilitation.
- » Pregnancy and safe exercise.
- » Osteoporosis or if you are at risk of osteopenia (weaker than normal bones) and want to use exercise to help support and strengthen your bones.
- » Exercising for a special event, sporting team or if you have a movement goal in mind.





PACIFIC ISLAND SCHOLARSHIP EMBRACES EXERCISE TO BEAT DISEASE

The application of exercise and sports science can improve health outcomes and reduce premature death in Pacific Island Nations, which have become hotspots for noncommunicable diseases.

As a global citizen concerned with health equity, ESSA is acting on international challenges with the launch of a new scholarship program that expands collaboration and support to neighbouring countries that do not have the same level of access to resources.

The Pacific Island Nation and Exercise and Sports Science Australia (PINE) Scholarship aims to empower health professionals and enable recipients to attend ESSA's industry leading Research to Practice Conference.

Shintika Kumar and Neha Puran, medical students from the University of Fiji and the inaugural recipients of the PINE Scholarship, shared their experiences with leading professionals and academics to address the urgent health challenges with an interdisciplinary approach.

“In my community we do not put enough emphasis on physical activity, and that is very concerning and something we need to work on,”

“Obesity rates are very high and with that there's an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes and other diseases.”

Program Chair, Associate Professor Simon Rosenbaum, said Australia and its closest neighbours need more opportunities to come together to improve health outcomes.

“Preventable noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease and diabetes are having a devastating impact on individuals and communities,” Simon said.

Left: Port Vila, Vanuatu

Right: Simon Rosenbaum & Shintika Kumar



“It’s important that we acknowledge our capacities and capabilities here in Australia. Physical activity has proven to be an effective treatment, but we must work alongside colleagues in the Pacific to learn how we could contribute to local efforts in reducing the burden of NCDs. “

ESSA’s biennial industry conference plays a pivotal role in the advancement of exercise and sports science as healthcare in the prevention, treatment and management of disease.

By bringing together established and emerging professionals, academics and students, ESSA fosters the growth of knowledge and application of exercise and sports science to tackle evolving health challenges.

The PINE Scholarship fills a gap in collaborative engagements between Australia and its neighbouring countries, internationalising the scope and value of accredited exercise and sports science professionals and providing a platform for interdisciplinary initiatives.

Simon emphasised the importance of learning from one another through knowledge-exchange in building better health outcomes.

“Knowledge-exchange is one of the most useful and impactful tools we have to improve the implementation and scale up of physical activity programs,” Simon said.

“The more diverse voices and perspectives we listen to, the richer our shared knowledge becomes.

“It’s important that we work together with colleagues from different cultures and learn to understand the needs of communities and how we can work together to address problems and barriers.

“Coming together enables us to internationalise the exercise and sports science profession and apply culturally sensitive, evidence-based exercise interventions as a practicable healthcare treatment.

“The scholarship is an inclusive opportunity for students to strengthen their capacity to lead health interventions in their own communities.”

For some communities, exercise referral infrastructure within the health system is yet to be established and people may require more support to be able to access appropriate, supervised programs.

Shintika, a part-time dancer, full-time medical student, believes physical activity is crucial to reduce risk factors and boost mental health in her community.

“The future direction of my community is to change the mindset and values of what it means to be healthy,” she said.

“Exercise physiology practitioners are not only treating the disease, we are also treating the mind.

“What we need to consider when approaching our patients is that we are not just treating a disease, we are also treating the ideologies, the differences and the unique problems that each patient is facing.”

The PINE Scholarship program and Research to Practice Conference are central to improving global health outcomes in Fiji and ESSA looks to expand its reach to more countries in the Pacific in the coming years.

Exercise, sports, other allied health and primary healthcare professionals are welcome to take part in the biennial event, with the next Conference taking place in 2026. Stay up to date with ESSA for upcoming event notices.

Right: Yasawa Islands, Fiji



VISION IMPAIRED RUNNER ON TRACK TO COMPLETE HALF-MARATHON



Running over 30km is already a challenging feat for most but imagine doing it while visually impaired.

Recently crossing the finish line for the 5km Bay to Bay Running Festival, Emily Cruden has now conquered four running events, completing more than 30km and raising funds for Guide Dogs Australia.

Emily was born with a rare genetic disorder, which is associated with an eye condition known as Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP).

Working alongside Accredited Exercise Physiologists (AEPs) Claire Monk, Adelle Bottrell and Sarah Yee, Emily now hopes to complete a half-marathon in the near future!

Active Ability Director and AEP Amanda Semaan said regular exercise for people with a disability not only improves their health and quality of life, but also drastically improves their confidence.

“Emily first started her journey with one of our very own exercise physiologists Claire Monk back in 2017 and recently achieved the 5km Bay to Bay. During her amazing running feats, an AEP is tethered to Emily as a guide runner,” said Amanda.

“Previously, Emily had little confidence to engage in physical activity due to her vision impairment and was not completing any planned exercise.

“Initially, her sessions comprised of interval training in her home, using some simple equipment and her treadmill. Slowly her confidence grew, and they soon progressed to trialling some tethered running outdoors.”

Emily took a liking to running very quickly, realising her disability was no longer a barrier to engaging in physical activity.

She also regularly attends the gym and enjoys the vast array of exercises available for her to complete. Emily and Claire continue to run together and are working towards a 10km event later this year.

Exercise & Sports Science Australia CEO Danielle Smith said although around 1 in 6 Australians (about 4.4 million people) have a disability, exercise provides a range of benefits, regardless of a person’s abilities.

“People living with a disability are less likely to engage in regular physical activity compared to those without a disability, even though they have similar health needs and face the same risks of chronic conditions,” said Ms Smith.

“Exercise should be a part of everyone’s life, regardless of disability. Importantly, an increase in physical activity can see those living with a disability develop and maintain independence, a sense of freedom and better quality of life.”

ESSA’s Exercise for Disabilities eBook covers a variety of disabilities that are common to Australians including autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Down syndrome, spinal cord injuries, Cerebral Palsy, Multiple Sclerosis (MS), deafness and many more. It covers the role exercise can play in improving physical and mental health and helping with daily living for those with disability.

This free eBook has been compiled with the help of ESSA accredited exercise professionals and allied health professionals who work every day with people with a disability to provide exercise interventions, advice, support and resources to improve their health and wellbeing.

Visit exerciseright.com.au to download the Exercise for Disabilities eBook or for more information on exercising right.



WE NOW KNOW HOW TO GET SENIORS WITH CHRONIC DISEASE TO LOVE EXERCISE

Australian seniors would markedly step up their exercise levels if they could access affordable community-based fitness classes tailored to specific health concerns, new research has found.

Results of the nation's largest study into older Australians and exercise show subsidised classes run by accredited exercise professionals – trained in the treatment of chronic disease – can assist seniors in becoming more physically active.

Almost 7,000 Australians aged 65-plus living in the community performed low-to-moderate intensity exercises in a range of 12-week exercise classes from aqua aerobics and gym to Pilates and yoga as part of the Exercise Right for Active Ageing program run by Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA).

Monash University studied the factors associated with participation in the community-based exercise classes, which were run all over the country and cost an average \$8 per class.

ESSA President Dr Brendan Joss said the study showed the affordable, disease-inclusive exercise classes greatly improved participants' quality of life.

"The program boosted overall physical activity levels and participants engaged in additional physical activity beyond the time spent in classes," he said.

"Participants became more physically active by one extra day per week and reduced sitting time by 30 minutes per day."

Classes in the Exercise Right for Active Ageing program were delivered by Accredited Exercise Physiologists (AEPs), university-trained allied health professionals who prescribe physical activity to prevent, treat and manage chronic conditions, both physical and mental.

Monash University's assessment of the Exercise Right for Active Ageing program, run while COVID-19 lockdowns were occurring, found exercise tailored to specific health concerns had the highest rates of attendance.

Many participants had high levels of comorbidity (multiple health conditions) and reported that disease-specific classes taught them how to self-manage their health where possible.

"Many participants joined the program because it was led by an Accredited Exercise Physiologist; this assured them that the class would be safe and beneficial to them, as many had multiple health conditions to consider."

"Supervision by an AEP gave participants the confidence to move safely and effectively."

Condition-specific classes also improved social connectedness among the cohort.

Shoulder & Back Rehab Workshops

IN PERSON, FULL DAY MUSCULOSKELETAL WORKSHOPS DESIGNED FOR REHABILITATION PROFESSIONALS

Expect a unique blend of science and clinical reality based on over 3 decades of clinical experience, continued PD, research & education

4 WORKSHOPS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE - EACH DELIVER 8 HOURS OF CPD ALL COURSES INCLUDE A BLEND OF THEORY, PRACTICAL AND CASE APPLICATIONS

- **Shoulder Rehab 1 (ESSA Accred 8 CPD)**
 - Pathophysiology, assessment techniques and rehab sequencing for a range of shoulder presentations frequently encountered in many client groups.
- **Lumbar Assessment (New)**
 - Builds practical clinical assessment & interpretation skills. Integrates assessing back mobility, movement patterns, motor control, neural compression & more.
- **Lumbar Spine Rehab 1**
 - Focuses on regional functional anatomy, injury aetiology & exercise considerations for common acute & chronic lumbar spine presentations.
- **Applied Lumbar Rehabilitation (New)**
 - Practical skill development & applied clinical reasoning. Focuses on rehab techniques & optimal sequencing.
 - Lumbar Assessment is a pre-requisite

SEE QR CODE LINK TO WEBSITE FOR MORE ON WORKSHOP CONTENT, NATIONAL SCHEDULE, ENROLMENTS & UPDATES ON NEW COURSE RELEASES



MEDICALLY FOCUSED FITNESS
www.medfit.co



SECURE YOUR PLACE \$45 OFF FULL FEE FOR EARLY BIRD REGISTRATIONS SEE WEBSITE FOR DETAILS



“Many participants reported feelings of loneliness due to their health conditions impacting their ability to move and socialise, but the classes gave them a support network of people experiencing the same thing,” Dr Joss said.

“The high attendance rates of the program suggest affordable, condition-specific physical activity is valued by older adults.”

Lead researcher Dr Christina Ekegren said the project was important for understanding the effectiveness of subsidised classes for older adults and the types of exercise those aged over 65 are most likely to enjoy.

“Despite some of the barriers that older adults face in engaging with exercise programs, there is still significant potential for improvements in strength, mobility and physical activity participation,” Dr Ekegren said.

“The classes ESSA provided were popular and valued and had a real impact on quality of life, especially in rural and regional areas.”

“So far, few studies of this scale have been completed in Australia, so this research is leading what we know about the effectiveness, and cost-effectiveness, of exercise for older adults.

“The sheer numbers of older people who signed up for this program show the need for subsidised classes.”

Dr Joss said funding subsidies for exercise classes tailored to older Australians were an effective low-cost strategy for improving their health outcomes and quality of life.

In 2022, chronic conditions were recorded as an underlying or associated cause of death for 90% of all deaths in Australia, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). Chronic conditions are also associated with substantial health system spending, with AIHW data showing \$43.76 billion was spent on the top three most costly condition groups which were all chronic (musculoskeletal conditions, cancer and other neoplasms, and cardiovascular diseases).

Exercise Right for Older Adults

Learn how to Exercise Right for your needs by talking to your local Accredited Exercise Physiologist. They are allied health professionals who are specially qualified to prescribe exercise for those living with injuries, pain or chronic illness.

Being active throughout your life is the best way to maintain health, wellbeing and quality of life. It can help to:

- » Prevent and manage chronic conditions
- » Stay socially connected
- » Stay independent
- » Maintain brain function and memory
- » Reduce risk of falls
- » Improve balance

Visit exerciseright.com.au/exercise-right-for-active-ageing to download your free eBook: Exercise Right for Older Adults.

Always here, for 60 years.



Over 60 years ago, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia launched Guild Insurance – designed to protect and safeguard the pharmacy profession. Since then Guild has expanded the network of professionals we protect by forming partnerships with associations who represent a wide range of industries and the professionals who work within these fields.

1800 810 213
guildinsurance.com.au



Proudly partnering with the Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA) for over 14 years means we understand the importance of protecting you with more than just a policy.

With us, you'll be shielded by a policy created from unmatched insight into your profession, access to risk management materials to help you reduce the risk of a claim, backing

from the industry body that stands up for Australian exercise scientists, and so much more.

Get the full picture of how you can be part of something bigger by visiting guildinsurance.com.au/ESSA or calling 1800 810 213 today.



Don't go it alone

HOW TO MAKE EXERCISE A HABIT

Written by Brent Nicol AEP



Habit-forming: how to exercise every day

Making exercise a habit or a part of your daily routine is something a lot of people struggle with, particularly if you aren't used to exercising regularly or are especially time-poor.

WHY IS EXERCISE A HARD HABIT TO CREATE?

The most common barrier people come across when creating a habit out of exercise is motivation. How do we stay motivated?

We've all heard about motivation and discipline, "no pain, no gain", "less excuses, more results". Motivation helps you achieve goals and keeps you going when you're tired, sore or have other commitments.

But changing your motivation into behaviour is the key when creating a habit.

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE AND EXERCISE

Behaviour change and exercise are key factors in achieving long-term health goals. As the evidence shows, meeting physical activity guidelines reduces your chance of dying from health-related causes by 30%. There's been a considerable amount of research into what helps people start exercising too.

So where does motivation come in when making exercise a habit?

Exercise physiologists call this "the intention to behaviour gap". Essentially, it measures the likelihood of wanting to exercise converting into actually exercising, and

the studies have found that the rate of those who had motivation to exercise and went on to successfully exercise was only 38%. This result suggests that using a coin flip to decide if you exercise or not gives you a better chance of success than relying on motivation.

Unfortunately, the approach of wanting to exercise, keeping yourself motivated and being disciplined does not always work - particularly for the 75% of Australian adults that do not engage in sufficient physical activity.

IF MOTIVATION ALONE DOESN'T WORK, THEN WHAT DOES?

Getting started with and maintaining an exercise routine is more complex than what the standard approaches may imply. It's not just a matter of getting up earlier, trying harder, or being better. Instead, it involves problem-solving, flexibility, and adopting a long-term approach.

A good starting point is to identify the core values that you associate with movement and physical activity. This involves being realistic about your daily and weekly commitments and making compromises with yourself, friends, family, work and responsibilities.

If you're looking to get started, focus first on what is achievable for you. To do this, open goals are a great tool.

HOW TO MAKE EXERCISE A HABIT

1. UTILISE OPEN GOALS

Open goals are non-specific and exploratory. They are questions you ask to ‘see how well you can do’.

For example:

How many times can I walk this week?

How many times can I sneak in a workout on the way home?

How many times can I take the stairs instead of the elevator today?

How many times can I wake up 15-30 minutes earlier and exercise before work this week?

Pay attention to your answers. Note what gets in the way and note what helps you get moving and stay moving. Be gentle with yourself and when something doesn't work or something gets in the way, avoid blame and guilt by showing yourself compassion.

Open goals are great for exploring different approaches and recognising what doesn't work for you.

2. FIND SOMETHING YOU ENJOY

Evidence shows that people are more likely to exercise consistently and make movement a habit if they're doing something they enjoy! Try different types of exercise until you find something you genuinely enjoy and that you can do again and again for the long term.

Don't be afraid to stray from the traditional forms of exercise like running, swimming, cycling or weightlifting, if those exercises don't bring you joy. The sky is the limit when it comes to different forms of movement. Reach out to an exercise professional to find the best exercise for you and get qualified exercise advice before you start something new.

3. REFLECT ON YOUR WORKOUT AND BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF

After each workout or exercise session, reflect on how you felt before, during and after.

Were you excited to start the workout or dreading the thought of it?

Were you having fun during it or couldn't wait for it to be over?

And how do you feel physically, mentally and emotionally afterwards?

The best workout for you will be the one that has positive answers to the above.

Interestingly, none of the above recommendations have anything to do with motivation. If we spend all of our time trying to become motivated to exercise (and try to improve that 38% success rate), we're missing out on the other 62% of the equation that has potential to make exercise a habit for us.

There are professionals at your fingertips dedicated to helping you move. Accredited Exercise Scientists and Accredited Exercise Physiologists are university-qualified exercise professionals dedicated to helping you exercise right, plus they can help make exercise a habit for you.

Find your local exercise professional today at essa.org.au/maps



HOW TO SEE AN AEP

In Australia, Accredited Exercise Physiologists (AEPs) are health professionals who specialise in the delivery of exercise for the prevention and management of chronic diseases and injuries. They are the most qualified exercise professionals in the exercise prescription field.

AEPs can help almost everyone, ranging from those with disabilities, diabetes and arthritis to those with injuries or illnesses like cancer.

If you're not currently seeing an AEP but are interested in doing so, there are several pathways and processes available to you. This article will outline the various ways you can access an AEP, ensuring you receive the professional guidance and support you need for your health and fitness journey.

PRIVATE REFERRAL

One of the most straightforward ways to see an AEP is through a private referral. You can directly book an appointment with an AEP without needing a referral from a GP or another health professional. This is particularly convenient if you wish to start immediately or if you're seeking services that are not covered under other schemes. While this option is typically out-of-pocket, many private health insurance policies offer rebates for exercise physiology services. It's advisable to check with your insurer to understand the coverage and any potential out-of-pocket expenses.



DOCTOR REFERRAL

If you have a chronic medical or health condition, you can access an AEP through a referral from your doctor under Medicare. This scheme, known as the Chronic Disease Management (CDM) plan or Enhanced Primary Care (EPC) plan, allows for up to five allied health services per calendar year, which can include exercise physiology. Your GP will assess your condition and, if appropriate, provide a referral to an AEP. This pathway ensures that the costs are partially covered by Medicare, making it a cost-effective option.

PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE

Many health insurers include cover for allied health services. If you have the appropriate level of extras cover, you may be eligible for rebates on exercise physiology sessions. The rebate amount and the number of sessions covered vary between insurers and policies, so it's essential to check the specifics with your health fund. Accessing an AEP through private health insurance can help reduce the overall cost, making it more affordable to maintain regular sessions.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Veterans with Gold or White Cards can access AEP services through the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA). To do so, you will need a referral from your GP. The DVA covers the cost of these services as part of the support provided to veterans, ensuring they receive the necessary care for their health and wellbeing. If you are a veteran, this pathway provides a valuable resource for managing physical health and rehabilitation needs.

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

Individuals with a disability who have a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plan may have access to exercise physiology services as part of their support package. To access an AEP through the NDIS, the services must be deemed reasonable and necessary and included in your plan. Working with your NDIS planner or coordinator, you can ensure that exercise physiology is part of your health and wellbeing strategy, helping you achieve your personal goals and improve your quality of life.

WORKPLACE HEALTH PROGRAMS

Many workplaces are now recognising the importance of employee health and wellness. Some employers offer workplace health programs that include access to exercise physiology services. These programs are designed to promote physical activity, prevent injuries, and enhance overall employee health. If your workplace offers such a program, it can be an excellent way to access an AEP without incurring additional costs. Check with your HR department to see if this option is available to you, and if it isn't, it might be worth suggesting it!

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

If you have been injured at work, you may be eligible to access exercise physiology services through a workers' compensation claim. Your GP or treating specialist can refer you to an AEP as part of your rehabilitation plan. The costs are covered by the workers' compensation insurance scheme, ensuring you receive the necessary care to recover and return to work. This pathway is specifically designed to support injured workers in their recovery process.

AGED CARE SERVICES

Residents in aged care facilities can access AEP services if these are included in their care plans. Exercise physiology can play a crucial role in maintaining mobility, strength, and overall health in older adults. Funding for these services can come from various sources, including aged care packages and individual contributions. If you or a loved one is in aged care, speak with the facility's management to explore the availability of exercise physiology services.

COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMS

Local councils and community health centres often offer health and wellness programs that include access to exercise physiology services. These programs are typically subsidised or provided at a low cost to the community, making them accessible to a broader range of people. Participating in community health programs can be an excellent way to engage with an AEP in a supportive and social environment. Check with your local council or community health/fitness centre for more information.

SPORTS CLUBS AND ORGANISATIONS

Depending on your club and level, it may be possible to access AEP services. Many sports organisations provide exercise physiology services as part of their injury prevention and management programs. If you are involved in sports, your club may offer these services to help you improve performance and manage any sports-related injuries.

OTHER ALLIED HEALTH

If you're already seeing another allied health professional for treatment for an ongoing health condition, you may consider asking them how physical activity could support your journey. If it's a good fit, they may be able to find an AEP locally and connect you, to help you get your treatment goals faster, and stay healthy for longer!

Find your local exercise professional today at essa.org.au/maps

AWARD WINNERS 2023

The Exercise & Sports Science Awards recognise outstanding accredited professionals who demonstrate a depth of knowledge and commitment to exercise and sports science through their practice and advocacy.



**ACCREDITED EXERCISE
PHYSIOLOGIST OF THE YEAR**
DR DAVID MIZRAHI



**ACCREDITED EXERCISE
SCIENTIST OF THE YEAR**
DR AMANDA HAGSTROM



**ACCREDITED SPORTS
SCIENTIST OF THE YEAR**
KARLEE QUINN



PRACTICE OF THE YEAR
EXERCISE FOR
REHABILITATION AND HEALTH



**PRACTICUM SUPERVISOR
OF THE YEAR**
KIRSTEN RUSSELL



CLIENT OF THE YEAR
MICK O'DOWD AND AEP
PATRICK MCINNES

CONTRIBUTORS



**MEMBER IMPACT
CONTRIBUTOR AWARD**
SHELLEY KEATING



**POLICY, ADVOCACY
AND RESEARCH
CONTRIBUTOR AWARD**
ROBERT STANTON



**STANDARDS, ETHICS
AND ACCREDITATION
CONTRIBUTORS AWARD**
ANNETTE RAYNOR

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2023 ESSA AWARD WINNERS!



Accredited Exercise Physiologist of the Year: Dr David Mizrahi

Dr David Mizrahi, Research Fellow at the Daffodil Centre and Chair of the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA) Exercise and Cancer Committee has significantly advanced the role of exercise physiology in cancer care.

Under his leadership, the field has seen remarkable progress, from initiating groundbreaking fellowships to driving policy changes that enhance patient care.

“In this role, I have led initiatives like the inaugural COSA Exercise Fellowship, awarded to Dr. Kim Edmunds, focusing on a health economic analysis of exercise-oncology programs,” David said.

David organised a sold-out exercise oncology workshop and advocated for increased Medicare sessions for Accredited Exercise Physiologist (AEP) services and more AEPs in hospitals. His efforts have boosted COSA's research potential, enabling national and international researchers to conduct exercise oncology studies through COSA's multidisciplinary members.

David's international work is also significant. “As a Fulbright Scholar, I spent 2022 at St. Jude Children's Hospital, a leader in childhood cancer research,” he explains.

He gave lectures at universities in Memphis, Hawaii, Penn State, and Messiah, and presented at the Sport and Exercise Science New Zealand conference in Auckland. David chaired and presented at the Paediatric Exercise Oncology Congress and helped develop Health Behaviour Guidelines for childhood cancer survivors.

The Fulbright Fellowship gave David valuable international exposure and collaboration opportunities. “I was able to work with world leaders in paediatric exercise oncology research, which has continued remotely,” he says.

This established him as an emerging leader, leading to roles like journal editor for exercise oncology submissions.

Collaborating with experts such as Professor Katie Schmitz, David published significant research on exercise in young adults and adolescents with a North American consortium.

He leads several key projects, including a three-year fellowship from The Kids Cancer Project to research exercise delivery to children during and after cancer treatment. “We will conduct quantitative analyses, qualitative studies, and randomised trials to identify priorities for delivering exercise,” he notes.

His work with The University of Sydney, National Health and Medical Research Council, and World Cancer Research Fund focuses on exercise protocols for cancer survivors with chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy.

Through his leadership roles, David actively works on policy changes. “I've led many advocacy submissions calling for increased access to exercise in cancer care,” he said. His efforts aim to expand AEP sessions for cancer patients via Medicare and increase AEP positions in cancer centres. David also launched the inaugural Exercise and Cancer Fellowship, highlighting the importance of health economic evaluations in advancing the field.



Practice of the Year: Exercise for Rehabilitation and Health

Exercise for Rehabilitation and Health, owned by Nicole French, has been honoured with the prestigious ESSA Practice of the Year award for their groundbreaking work in diabetes care through the Exercise for Rehabilitation and Health's (EFRHs) program, which is gaining national acclaim for its innovative approach to diabetes remission.

The diabetes care program at EFRH, primarily led by AEPs, implements the findings of the UK Direct Trial, uniquely tailored to an Australian context.

The program focuses on three key aspects: real food emphasis, combined dietary and exercise interventions, and integrated medical support. This holistic approach aims to foster sustainable lifestyle changes, with the ultimate goal of achieving diabetes remission and improving overall health markers.

Central to the program's success is the collaboration between AEPs and General Practitioners, ensuring participant safety and support. This integrated team framework promotes lasting lifestyle changes and overall wellbeing by systematising care and enhancing communication among all providers.

EFRH's vision extends beyond their immediate practice, aiming to make diabetes remission services accessible to more Australians. By supporting AEP colleagues across the country, EFRH hopes to broaden the impact of their effective model of care.

In addition to the ESSA award, EFRH was honored with the 2023 Australian Women's Small Business Champion Award. This accolade highlights the company's commitment to advancing healthcare, recognising the significant contributions of AEPs in health care prevention and management.

"Through our working model of care, we have paved the way for the introduction of a Type 2 diabetes remission clinic. This initiative reflects the evolving role of exercise physiology in effectively addressing complex health challenges," said Nicole.

"Our impacts are amplified through our national advocacy efforts and partnerships that position us as industry experts and first choice providers. Such efforts and partnerships have influenced national legislative reforms and health policy changes."



Accredited Sports Scientist of the Year: Karlee Quinn

Karlee Quinn, a leading figure in Australian sports science, has been awarded Accredited Sports Scientist of the Year in recognition of her exceptional career to date. Her commitment to understanding and applying best practices, coupled with her ability to build strong relationships with athletes and their support teams, has been instrumental in her success.

With a focus on elite sports science and talent identification, Karlee anticipates a growing emphasis on diversity and athlete wellbeing in the lead up to the Brisbane 2032 Olympics and Paralympics.

Her work with the Youfor2032 Program at the Queensland Academy of Sport has provided valuable insights into talent identification and development, enabling her to refine her approach and contribute across multiple sporting codes. Karlee's belief in the individuality of athletes underpins her approach to create flexible pathways to support a range of developmental trajectories.

Beyond talent identification and development, Karlee has made significant contributions to women's sport. Her role as sports science lead for the Australian Rugby League Women's Team during the successful 2022 World Cup saw her develop the performance standards for female players and contribute extensive research into the performance and physical profiles of the players to prepare them for competition.

Combined with her peer-reviewed research, Karlee's work has advanced the field for female athletes. Her research into the effects of oral contraceptives on physiology, as well as delivering athlete-led workshops, highlights her dedication to empowering female athletes and creating inclusive training environments.

"Women must have a voice in shaping their own training environments, to not only enhance their immediate training experience but also to foster long-term engagement and enjoyment in sport," Karlee said.

"Similar efforts can be extended to support underrepresented athletes, such as those with disabilities, First Nations people, and those from regional areas."

"This shift will enrich the field even more and challenge us to provide equitable and evidence-based support for more diverse athlete populations."

As Karlee looks to the future, she is committed to building sustainable sport pathways that support athletes beyond Brisbane 2032. Her legacy will be defined by her contributions to both elite performance and the broader development of athletes from all walks of life.



Need legal help?

Maurice Blackburn are the preferred lawyers for ESSA members.

As an ESSA member you receive a free 30-minute initial consultation

We specialise in

-  Work-related injuries
-  Public place injuries
-  Road accident injuries
-  Financial advice disputes
-  Medical injuries
-  Wills planning & disputes
-  Asbestos, silica and occupational diseases
-  Superannuation & insurance claims



1800 810 812
mauriceblackburn.com.au



Accredited Exercise Scientist of the Year: Dr Amanda Hagstrom

In significant recognition of her contributions to the field of exercise science, Dr. Amanda Hagstrom has been awarded Accredited Exercise Scientist of the Year. This accolade celebrates her outstanding achievements and dedication to advancing the understanding and application of exercise science, marking a pivotal moment in her career.

Amanda, a Senior Lecturer at the University of New South Wales, has been a transformative figure in the field. Known for her innovative research and passionate advocacy, she has made substantial impacts that extend well beyond academic circles.

“I am honoured to have my work recognised with this award,” she said.

“It’s incredibly rewarding to see the positive effects of our research on people’s lives.”

Her pioneering studies have shed new light on the benefits of exercise, particularly in populations with chronic conditions. Leveraging her expertise, she has become a prominent advocate for accessible exercise, utilising the media as a platform to engage and educate the public.

Beyond her research, Amanda is highly regarded for her teaching and mentorship. She fosters an empowering learning environment where her staff and students overcome limitations and capture opportunities to promote physical activity.

“It’s important that the next generation of exercise experts can address evolving and complex health challenges.”

This recognition comes at a time when the importance of exercise science is increasingly acknowledged in women’s health for promoting overall wellbeing. Amanda’s work has focused significantly on fixing the underrepresentation of female physiology in research literature.

“Resistance training is so important for women’s health and so is understanding how this can be best applied during perimenopause and throughout the menstrual cycle,” Amanda said.

“My work highlights exercise as a crucial component of preventing and managing health conditions for women.”

This award is a fitting tribute to her relentless pursuit of knowledge and her unwavering dedication to improving health outcomes through exercise. As she looks to the future, there is no doubt that her contributions will continue to shape the field of exercise science and inspire many more to follow in her footsteps.



Practicum Supervisor of the Year: Kirsten Russell

Growing up in Western Queensland, Kirsten Russell witnessed the stark disparities in healthcare access. This experience ignited a lifelong mission to bring equitable healthcare to rural regions.

As one of the pioneering clinicians at the Murtupuni Centre for Rural and Remote Health (MCRRH) at James Cook University (JCU) in Mount Isa, Kirsten has been awarded ESSA’s 2023 Practicum Supervisor of the Year.

This prestigious accolade recognises Kirsten’s relentless commitment to developing healthcare careers in rural and remote communities, crafting impactful practicum placements in substance-use recovery, youth diversion initiatives, and geriatric falls prevention.

In her role, Kirsten serves as the cornerstone for exercise physiology and exercise science students, guiding them through immersive rural placements.

Collaborating with key community stakeholders—such as Mount Isa Recovery Services, Cootharinga, Police Citizen Youth Club, North West Remote Health, Gidgee Healing and North West Health Hospital Service—Kirsten ensures students deliver essential services where local resources are stretched thin.

This hands-on approach equips students with critical skills and simultaneously addresses pressing community health needs.

Facing numerous challenges, including limited awareness of the profession and the cultural adjustments required for students in remote settings, Kirsten continues to provide comprehensive support, acting as both a clinical supervisor and a cultural mentor, ensuring students are well-prepared to meet the unique demands of rural healthcare.

Kirsten’s advocacy goes beyond clinical practice, redefining exercise as an inclusive, holistic activity accessible to all, promoting physical and mental wellbeing. By integrating students into the heart of community healthcare, Kirsten creates a sustainable model where former students often return to serve in these communities, bridging critical workforce gaps.

Kirsten’s unwavering dedication and innovative approach are transforming rural healthcare, empowering communities, and nurturing the next generation of healthcare professionals. Her work not only addresses immediate healthcare needs but also ensures a legacy of improved health outcomes for rural and remote communities.



Client of the year: Mick O’Dowd and Accredited Exercise Physiologist Patrick McInnes

Mick’s remarkable journey from battling sepsis and amputation to reclaiming a fulfilling life is nothing short of inspiring.

His rehabilitation process, guided by Healthstin’s expertise, has been marked by key milestones that showcase both his perseverance and the collaborative efforts of the Healthstin team.

Patrick McInnes, Mick’s exercise physiologist, vividly remembers the moment Mick swam his first lap on his stomach using a snorkel. “That was a real standout moment for me,” he said. Mick’s determination to challenge himself, coupled with the rapport they built, allowed them to push boundaries in his training regimen.

As Mick’s sessions progressed, Patrick noticed his enjoyment and dedication grow and that he really looked forward to every training day. Mick’s commitment to his health journey and trust in the process have been instrumental in his progress.

The Healthstin team adopted a creative approach tailored to Mick’s unique needs. With Mick’s case being highly complex, they designed a varied weekly program that constantly evolved. This innovative method ensured each session was engaging and productive, leading to tremendous results over the past year.

Mick’s transformation goes beyond reclaiming everyday tasks; it reignites his love for the outdoors and represents hope for the broader community of individuals undergoing rehabilitation.

His story highlights the power of teamwork, determination, and innovation in overcoming life’s challenges.

Through exercise, Mick has improved his fitness, stamina, and mental health. His journey serves as a testament to refusing to let disability define life’s possibilities and striving to be the best version of oneself.



Member Impact Contributor Award: Shelley Keating

Shelley Keating, Co-Chair of the ESSA Queensland State Chapter, has been honored with the Member Impact Contributor Award, recognising her exceptional leadership and advocacy in exercise science. Her innovative efforts have significantly shaped the strategic direction and impact of the chapter, aligning closely with ESSA’s national goals.

As Co-Chair, Shelley spearheaded the development of an advocacy plan, coordinating with the National Policy and Advocacy team to create synergistic goals and strategies.

“Our core goal was to engage the ESSA Queensland State Chapter in local and national advocacy and policy activities,” she explained.

This initiative involved team members undertaking the ‘Advocacy Introductory Engagement Session’ to understand ESSA’s advocacy framework and action pillars. Shelley’s efforts included meetings with the Queensland Chief Allied Health Officer and the ESSA Manager for Policy and Advocacy, ensuring that key initiatives were discussed and addressed.

One of Shelley’s notable achievements in 2023 was leading the State Chapter’s contribution to the Queensland strategy for the upcoming state election. By forming a Queensland Election Working Party, conducting environmental scans and coordinating focus groups, she helped identify the top priorities for the Chapter. These priorities were mental health, physical activity in schools, diabetes management in rural areas, cancer care in rural areas and accreditation for sports scientists.

“The Queensland Election Priorities document will detail the strategies and solutions for these key issues,” she noted, emphasising the Chapter’s ongoing role in supporting advocacy efforts.

Shelley’s involvement in ESSA’s submission for the Parliamentary Inquiry into Diabetes is another highlight of her impactful work. With her extensive research and clinical experience, she contributed to the submission’s eight recommendations, including the representation of AEPs and AES in diabetes management and prevention efforts. “Our strategic emphasis on exercise within a multidisciplinary care framework can significantly mitigate the health, social and economic burden of diabetes,” she stated.

Under Shelley’s leadership, the Queensland State Chapter has also excelled in fostering collaboration and communication with industry partners. The 2019 State Symposium, co-led by Shelley and Associate Professor and

ESSA Vice President, featured a diverse program covering topics from chronic pain to high-intensity interval training for chronic disease. The event, supported by partners like Diabetes Queensland and the Stroke Foundation, provided valuable networking opportunities for members.

Shelley's role in leading the Advocacy Strategy for ESSA in Queensland involves actively engaging clinicians and academics. "We seek input through our clinical and academic networks, ensuring our efforts are grounded in the latest research and clinical perspectives," she said. This inclusive approach enhances the relevance and impact of the Chapter's actions, bridging gaps between research, practice, and policy.



Policy, Advocacy and Research Contributor Award: Robert Stanton

Robert Stanton, a dedicated member of ESSA for over two decades, has been honoured with the Policy, Advocacy, and Research Contributor Award. His extensive contributions to the Publications Committee and Professional Development Review Committee have significantly advanced ESSA's mission and impact.

Since becoming Chair of the Publications Committee in 2021, Robert has led several initiatives, including structuring the submission process for Position Statements, Consensus Statements and guidelines. He has also overseen the review of requests from other organisations for co-endorsement of various statements.

"The most significant project to date has been the coordination of the ESSA 2022 Covid-19 and Exercise Guidelines," Robert shared.

"This was a timely and important piece of work, providing evidence-based advice for exercise professionals during a period of great uncertainty."

In his role on the Professional Development Review Committee, Robert reviews and provides feedback on applications for accreditation, ensuring they align with ESSA's priorities and strategic planning.

"A key issue in all my roles is consideration of the end user; what will be the benefit to ESSA members," he explained. This user-focused approach helps maintain the relevance and quality of professional development offerings.

Robert's involvement in ESSA's Research to Practice Conference Committee further demonstrates his commitment to bridging the gap between research and practical application. His insights have been instrumental in shaping ESSA's emerging research strategy and 10-year outlook. "It's critical to consider the end user, as members

and practitioners will apply this information in their daily practice," Robert said. His background as a practitioner and academic allows him to balance the direct impact on members with ESSA's reputation as an internationally recognised agency.

When selecting individuals for the Publications Committee, Robert and his colleagues prioritise a diverse representation of career stages, gender, backgrounds and academic experience. This approach ensures high-quality submissions and published documents that benefit ESSA members. "We aim to minimise bias and ensure we have the expertise to consider the submissions coming to the committee," he noted.

Robert Stanton's dedication and strategic vision have made a lasting impact on ESSA and the field of exercise and sports science, setting a high standard for future contributions.



Standards, Ethics and Accreditation Contributors Award: Annette Raynor

Annette Raynor's dedication to upholding high standards in exercise and sports science education is evident through her role as a course accreditation reviewer and member of the Course Accreditation Committee.

"When conducting reviews, I focus on quality improvement while appreciating the limitations universities face within their environments," said Annette.

Her goal is to assist universities in enhancing their processes and products while upholding the standards of ESSA.

Annette's involvement with ESSA and the academic community extends beyond formal roles. She values mentoring early-career academics and finds accreditation work to be rewarding. "Over the years, I've met wonderful people and collaborated with many academics across Australia," she said. This exposure allows her to see high-quality teaching and learning firsthand.

With experience in various universities, including international settings like Singapore, Annette has gained insights into different approaches to education. She emphasises just how important it is that we allow the universities to play to their strengths, and at the same time, assuring the professional standards are always maintained through accreditation.

Annette envisions exercise and sports science education expanding to include a greater focus on affecting successful behaviour change and working with our ageing population. She emphasises the importance of preparing graduates for specific and emerging roles in the industry.





With the help of ESSA accredited exercise professionals, Exercise Right offers qualified advice through factsheets, ebooks, articles, videos and other educational materials.

Whether you're living with a disability, injury, health condition or illness, you can find qualified exercise advice at exerciseright.com.au



ESSA:

FOR EXERCISE ADVICE YOU CAN TRUST,
VISIT [EXERCISERIGHT.COM.AU](https://exerciseright.com.au)