

Inter-professional collaboration: The Government is Mandating Your Success!

Section 1: OPPORTUNITY: The Changing Landscape of the Health Industry for Fitness Professionals

As fitness professionals, Kinesiologists, Athletic Therapists, Personal Trainers, you name it, we are missing one monumental piece of the puzzle towards our personal and organizational successes. We don't all consider ourselves as health care providers, as part of the regulated healthcare system, because until now we have not been. With the regulation of Kinesiologists in Ontario however, this is changing.

For the benefit of the public's health, their perception of the industry and for the ultimate goals of our patients/clients we would all do well to begin practicing from this mindset, as part of the health care system. Prevention, management, treatment, recovery, quality of life- human movement has a place in all of these areas of health. Spread the word.

My goal with my involvement in the PTDC and as the continuing education coach and part of the hiring committee with Body and Soul Fitness, is to encourage individuals working on the health and fitness side of the health industry, to strive towards considering themselves as full-fledged members of the professional health community. In essence this means two basic things:

1. We have a practice, not a job- and this means that we do not and cannot know everything, our role is to keep practicing and trying to improve.

2. We have an intimate roll in the overall health of our clients and to practice effectively, we need to be in the loop with the other caregivers in our client's circle of care. This area is of particular importance as often we see our clients with a frequency that far exceeds that of other care providers!

What does this mean for our daily activities and longer-term planning? With Kinesiologists becoming government regulated health practitioners what does it mean for the health and fitness professionals currently practicing? It is up to us how we plan to capitalize on the opportunities that are presenting themselves as the industry adapts to our growing understanding of movement as medicine.

The climate in the health community is changing.

Increasingly more and more practitioners are aware of the importance of exercise as a part of the prevention and maintenance of overall health, vitality, quality and longevity of life. The professional colleges that regulate the other health care professionals along with Kinesiologist's are *mandating inter-professional collaboration* as part of the assurance that practitioners are practicing at the peak of their abilities for the public.

Initiatives like '**Exercise is Medicine**' are gaining ground and the doors are opening for exercise prescribers to reach out to more people in need of a movement component to their daily lives

via government funding (ministries of health promotion and family health teams) and third-party payers (insurance companies and extended benefit providers including employers).

Beyond even the health professional community, the population at large is becoming aware that exercise in its many forms is required for optimal health and vitality as well. However, their first stop when searching for better health, whether it be in a holistic sense, fitness sense, critical disease prevention or rehabilitation sense, from an event or injury, is often not us, but it is another health practitioner. Herein lies a huge opportunity in this changing landscape.

This professional community is not only limited to other 'physical medicine practitioners' (for a full list see the appendix for their professional association information), but also increasingly the door is open to connect with practitioners focusing on mental and emotional health and even areas like financial and vocational health and performance.

In short, fully appreciate the value of your practice in the lives of everyone, your ability to enhance the results of the work of other practitioners, and vice versa, and cast your net wide and creatively. Exercise is Medicine. Exercise is Preventative. Exercise has Value, know your value!

Section 2: PHILOSOPHY: In it for growth and success, yours and theirs

Why are you reading this?

1. Do you have an incredible **passion** for healthy exercise and its ability to help heal the mind and body and bring it towards a more productive and positive balance?
2. Do you believe that there are many other health practitioners that can help you help your clients achieve this balance and their goals?
3. Are you a personal trainer or fitness professional because *you* are this passionate person interested in helping people become better?
4. Are you doing what you are for a career or are you a trainer just because it's your job?

The fitness landscape is changing. Unless you answered yes to all 4 questions you're in the wrong profession and will get left behind once this paradigm shift takes hold. You may get by as a trainer but you will never achieve success.

If health and fitness is going to become an integral part of our picture of health care, we all need to not only feel and live this passion, we need to be part of the conversation about health. This means developing a clear understanding of our Goals, Roles, Obligations and Expectations from and with the client/patient and the rest of their health team.

Many of us have multiple levels of professional **certification** and hence can have multiple roles with our clients, moving beyond physical fitness and into nutritional and motivational fitness.

This is wonderful and provides other challenges with regards to what hat to wear when, but for the purposes of this section our actions will be focused on those that contribute to the goals of achieving healthy, powerful and balanced movement, strength and posture from a movement

perspective.

Let's be honest and realistic:

- 1) Passion drives us to express who we are by personally training people to *achieve their goals*.
- 2) To achieve their goals, our clients at some point will likely need help from other professionals.
- 3) Our best and most productive source of clients is referrals. Referrals come from people that have progressed, enjoyed and achieved.
- 4) THE GOAL IS ACHIEVING GOALS. Be clear on your goals, your client's goals and open your collective doors to other ways to find help! The end result is a more robust source of business to boot! As long as achieving your client's goals drives your action with your personal goals firmly in mind, the rest will fall into place.

The theme here is ego-less practice of your art and science with a mind to achieving goals and enjoying the learning and growing experience that goes along with it!

So reach out and enjoy the chance to meet new people, learn new practices and expand your perspectives!

Section 3: ACTION: Expand your network and build your team

You have studied, you have and are practicing your craft and adding to it all the time, share your passion to help people achieve by telling more people about what you do!

The following is a system I've developed that will serve as a base to help us connect with other practitioners to expand our business.

1. Create a list of local practitioners in the various professions that are of interest to you and/or your clients (NDs, DOs, DCs, RMTs, PTs, TCMs, RDs, Shiatsu, acupuncture, Bowen, Matrix re-patterning, M.A.T... the list is substantial, what do you and your individual clients believe in?).
2. Do some research and contact them regarding areas of specialty or focus in their practice (websites, testimonials, email, phone, in person).
3. Ask them if they have some preferred providers of their own.
4. Get them to your facility and if possible, take them through an assessment and/or build them a skeleton program if they are interested.
5. Engage them about their ability to take on any new clients and/or how they might see collaborating with you. Give them a value proposition (tell them how you can help them by working together).

6. **KEEP IN TOUCH!** This is basic but fundamental. Tell them about the continuing education you are doing, let them know what opportunities may arise that they may be able to benefit from, chat about general case studies, grab tea, coffee, you name it. The key is to keep in touch with this other passionate person in your network!

An easy way is to create a separate mailing list for your professional contacts. Sending an occasional update detailing what you've been working on or what workshops you've been attending will keep your name at the top of their mind.

7. **KNOW THAT YOU OFFER A GREAT SERVICE TO HELP THEIR PATIENTS AND VICE VERSA!**

Treat the relationship with mutual respect and the rest will flow as it will if you encourage your clients to keep their minds open as well!

The real trick to making this work is to be yourself. If you enjoy being uber-organized and professional and are looking for a contact that has a similar compartment, create an introductory letter and CV of sorts outlining your goals and schedule some regular meetings perhaps. If you enjoy a more casual approach, reach out over coffee, tea or beer and keep in touch with quick emails and points of interest.

Remember, we are, or at least the goal is, to be busy professionals that are seeking to keep our clients/patients on the right path towards their goals. Your contacts don't have to be in the 100s or even over 10, but have a couple good people you trust in the various fields and enjoy the ability to have people to learn and grow with!

For the more advanced: Make your mark, specialize

Becoming an expert takes years and 1000s of hours of focused practice. If your passion is to reach out to a specific population (for example Parkinson Disease sufferers) then you need to narrow your net.

Find the organizations, specialty clinics, practitioners, groups and product providers that service your niche and make that your focus. The goals and the formulae is still the same Huge opportunity lies within your ability to connect with the gatekeepers, those people that have a say in the treatment and management of certain populations. We need to be on the team and they need to realize it. Our health and vitality is increasingly dependant on passionate people pursuing specific areas of knowledge and its application.

3.1: Create your list

Use your local professional associations, your clients and peers, two feet and a heartbeat and the Internet to build your list of practitioners and clinics/practices. Below we've listed some professional organization in different regions. This document will remain open so if you want your region to be listed please send us the info and we'll add it.

Go to the website for the links (<http://www.theptdc.com/?p=1658>)

3.2: Do your research

Creating a niche if you don't want to be a generalist is a fantastic way to separate yourself from the crowd and help you focus your education and networking.

- specialty clinics
- specialty hospital services
- family health teams
- disease associations
- disease education programs
- specialty journals/information periodicals

3.3: Share the network

See 3.1 and expand your network by getting to know theirs! The list in 3.1 is not exhaustive, but it is a list of some of the more movement-related regulated providers in Ontario. Other areas to search might be neurologist, sports psychologists, homeopathic doctors, yoga teachers etc.

3.4: Show and Tell

To be blunt, if you are not willing to bring another health care provider into your facility and take them through your intake process and have them as a client, get to that point of confidence in your practice. Continuing education opportunities abound, speak with your peers or those you hope to work with or impress and prepare yourself to build your practice. There are many ways to enhance your skills, from various conference, certifications. The PTDC exists to help you filter through the industry and build your professional abilities and confidence, explore and do your research.

3.5: Learn about them!

Can your new contacts take on new clients? What stage are they in their practice, what other services are they looking to offer that you might engage your clients in using, you yourself in using or that you might contribute towards. Are they willing to help you grow your business as well

3.6: Keep in touch

This is completely up to you and your style. Set email reminders, organize regular meetings, sort out your quiet times of the year and make these networking times. Send letters, updates, the goal here is to keep in touch in a positive, non-harassing manner. One of the best ways I have found to keep in touch is to share your mutual clients/contacts progress (with their consent of course). Maybe add a line or two on the importance of networking through conferences / workshops etc.

3.7: KNOW YOUR VALUE

Grow yourself and your skills, keep relevant and passionate and this will come across.

Stagnate and that will come across too. Learn about all of the different ways in which your practice can and does help people. Take the time to understand just what your presence means for the lives of your clients/patients and enjoy!

Concluding Thoughts:

I believe the health care system and philosophies of our country and society need to and are changing. Please truly consider and understand the roll you play and get yourself out there, letting people and gatekeepers alike know who you are and what you can do for them. Our specializing society has the flaw of people operating and living in silos. Dr. Harvey Silver told me one day that people who are unaware are unaware that they are unaware. Educate, empower and enjoy!

About the Author:

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