

# Journal of Professional Exercise Physiology

ISSN 1550-963X

December 2014

Vol 12 No 12

**American Society of Exercise Physiologists**  
The Professional Organization of Exercise Physiologists

## **ASEP Board Certification and Exercise Medicine**

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*One does not discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore.*

*-- Andre Gide (1869-1951)*

**T**he ASEP exercise physiologists are going places. Literally and figuratively, they are pushing boundaries and pushing aside obstacles. Maybe you haven't charted your course yet, but ASEP exercise physiologists have never been more ready, more excited about the future, and ASEP as the professional organization of exercise physiologists will be with them at every turn of their career. The ASEP leadership understands that in addition to cardiac rehabilitation, Board Certified Exercise Physiologists, who specialize in the prescription of exercise medicine interventions for clients and patients at high risk of developing or with existing chronic medical conditions, are the healthcare professionals to help prevent or manage chronic disease or injury.

Point in fact, more than 400,000 American women die from heart disease each year. Ask any doctor and you will get the message that a "heart checkup" is a good thing. Likewise, ask an ASEP exercise physiologist and get the same concerns. They understand that about every minute in the United States a woman dies from heart disease. It is a major health problem. Increasingly, medical doctors understand that Board Certified Exercise Physiologists are held accountable to prescribing exercise medicine with integrity. They are regulated by the ASEP standards of conduct of which integrity is considered to be the highest priority.

So, given this positive view of the profession of exercise physiology, what is the role of the academic exercise physiologists in helping ASEP in its promotion of the profession of exercise physiology in healthcare? It is clear that one of the best messages they can convey from their academic position is that of speaking the truth. Even if the message goes against the status quo, it is the right thing to do – right? Well, at times, speaking out

may impact others so much that the consensus is “honesty may seem unwise.” No doubt this why many exercise physiologists in higher education aren’t willing to do anything to help their students get past the roadblocks created by other groups.

Yes, there is the potential for negative consequences of truth-telling and, yes, if exercise physiologists think that being honest is problematic (i.e., as in limiting one’s career), they are much less likely to speak up. They understand that those in the power position with a different organization may take offense to a colleague’s thoughts and ideas. It is strange what some adults will do to protect status quo. They simply do not want people to rock-the-boat or otherwise those in power will push back. So, too often they say, “I don’t want to get involved” or “Whatever it is you are talking about, forget it.” Getting faculty to go along with change is full of challenges.

Yet, if exercise physiologists can’t get past the power of others to keep everything the same, what can they do? How are they going to move strategically into healthcare with other healthcare professions dominating their actions? If they don’t figure it out soon, the failure to do so will limit their decision-making and stifle mutual support and opportunities for innovation and practice in exercise medicine. Perhaps, part of the answer lies with teaching the importance of prescribing exercise medicine backed by ASEP Board Certified Exercise Physiologists. Part, not all of what that may mean will be determined by the role of various risk factors for heart disease and other diseases and disabilities.

I cannot stress enough that the Board Certified Exercise Physiologist is scientific trained in accordance with an accredited curriculum with appropriate hands-on experiences to counsel clients in the use of a range of strategies that foster new mental and physical behaviors to reduce the risk of disease and/or disabilities. To begin with, clients and/or patients under the supervision of the ASEP exercise physiologist need answers to the following questions: “Do you know what your blood pressure is while sitting? Does heart disease run in your family? Do you smoke? Do you engage in regular exercise? What does your diet consist of? Do you have an autoimmune disease? How are you handling stress at home and/or at work?”

ASEP leaders cannot stress enough that exercise medicine should be administered by Board Certified Exercise Physiologists. They are ASEP approved healthcare professionals with the scientific training to increase awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, and they understand how to help clients see the connection between regular exercise and life without chronic disease. Clients need to know that a healthier lifestyle helps to offset a family history of heart disease, lowers elevated cholesterol and blood pressure, and reduces recurring symptoms of chronic fatigue and muscle aches.

That said -- the process is perceived as complicated. However, it doesn’t have to be even though exercise medicine isn’t just about saving lives from premature death and injury. It is also about making a professional commitment to a new way of living that can change how society looks at and thinks about regular exercise. Remember, while it is true that exercise medicine must be safely prescribed, we can’t assume that everyone with an

interest in exercise knows how to safely prescribe it. The ASEP certified exercise physiologists are "the" healthcare professionals prepared to stay the course with clients and/or patients.

Like most things in life, people need some expert guidance. While starting an exercise program is a huge achievement, the real challenge is staying with it. Overcoming the physical and emotional obstacles to reach one's true health potential is believed to be by some exercisers the equivalent of climbing the highest mountain day after day. That's why every person needs a professional to support and show the way. Board Certified Exercise Physiologists are the building blocks to a healthier community and society. They help clients overcome their limitations and climb to new heights in health and happiness. Little by little, the numerous benefits of exercise medicine result in a completely different client or patient who returns to his or her earlier healthy condition and gets on with life and living.

Exercise physiology research during the past 20 years reveals that Americans aren't doomed to an early death by disease. The concept of "exercise medicine" shouldn't come as a surprise or even a bombshell. It has been recognized as "free medication" for a very long. Yet, there is still the old saying, "It's just exercise, right," No, it isn't. It is exercise medicine prescribed as exercise physiologists who are the new 21st century healthcare professionals. Regular exercise is a psychophysiological awakening. That is why it is so important to see exercise physiology through a new lens! When in doubt of this fact, why not be bold and embrace a whole new way of thinking with an ASEP exercise physiologist who advocates lifestyle modification for chronic disease?

Clients and patients are led safely into putting their best foot forward with at least 3 days of 30 minutes of low to moderate exercise intensity week after week, month after month. A change in a person's sedentary lifestyle begins with taking the first step to a new and healthier way of thinking. It begins with walking to enhance the cardiorespiratory system and, then, it is important to add some mild to moderate resistance training to build lean muscle mass. Almost without the clients' and/or patients' awareness of the health benefits, particularly the cardiovascular changes that occur with regular exercise, they will wake up to exercise medicine reversing years of inactivity and aging. They will discover the power of their mental state of mind to take a closer look at making the right choices that will reduce the risk factors for metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes mellitus, some cancers, osteoporotic fractures, and depression.

Clearly, the Board Certified Exercise Physiologist's role in exercise medicine is to raise the attention of exercise physiology as a profession that is interested in incorporating regular exercise into the general practice of disease prevention. Hence, in the not too distant future, Board Certified Exercise Physiologists will work side by side with medical doctors within an interprofessional paradigm in the prevention and management of acute and chronic diseases. So, if you are an exercise physiologist who thinks this is a great idea, contact ASEP and begin the process of sitting for the EPC exam. Dare to stay the course

and recharge your life with a professional certification. Do not settle for mediocrity with a weekend certification. Commitment and dedication to a worthwhile life are the necessary qualities to realize a new life of mental, physical, and financial possibilities. Imagine, just as regular physical activity (walking, hiking, and gardening) increases cognitive function, increases quality of life, and decreases mortality, improving your professional status will produce the important benefits as well. So, ask yourself, "Do you have the courage and conviction to be a Board Certified Exercise Physiologist?" If not, why not consider the old Latin proverb: "believe that you have it, and you have it." Why not? Then, begin the path of becoming who you want to be.

Keep in mind that according to the American Heart Association the prevalence of heart failure and stroke by year 2030 is expected to increase by approximately 25% at a healthcare cost of \$818 billion. With supervision by an ASEP exercise physiologist, a client's elevated blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol can be reduced without the side effects and costs of traditional medications. Also, if started earlier rather than later in life, the benefits of improvement in muscular strength and endurance help to reduce the stress-induced elevated sympathetic activity. These benefits are real, but they must be realized safely. That is the role of the ASEP exercise physiologist.

The good news is that Board Certified Exercise Physiologists can help by evaluating, counseling, and supervising clients. All that is necessary is to recognize that life without regular exercise is a short cut to mental and physical deterioration. No one wants to live a compromised life. Similarly, if you are in need of a professional credential, contact ASEP or an academic exercise physiologist close to you to help you start a new way to live your life as a credible healthcare professional. Think positive, believe in yourself, and develop the "I can" and you will become what you want to be. Others have learned the importance of being a self-starter, you can too. As Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) said, "The future is purchased at the price of vision in the present."

### ***Suggested Reading***

*Introduction to Exercise Physiology*. ISBN 978-1-4496-1709-7-ISBN 1-4496-3 - Soft Cover - Publisher: Jones & Bartlett Learning - 2013 - Author: Tommy Boone

*The Professionalization of Exercise Physiology: Certification, Accreditation, and Standards of Practice of the American Society of Exercise Physiologists (ASEP)*. ISBN10: 0-7734-4855-1 ISBN13: 978-0-7734-4855-1 - Hardcover - Publisher: The Edwin Mellen Press - 2009 - Author: Tommy Boone

*Ethical Standards and Professional Credentials In The Practice of Exercise Physiology*. ISBN-13 978-0-7734-5245-9 - Hardcover - Publisher: The Edwin Mellen Press - 2007 - Author: Tommy Boone

*Exercise Physiology As a Career: A Guide and Sourcebook.* ISBN: 0773456295 - Hardcover - Publisher: The Edwin Mellen Press - 2006 - Author: Tommy Boone

*Exercise Physiology: Professional Issues, Organizational Concerns, and Ethical Trends.* ISBN: 0773460772 - Hardcover - Publisher: The Edwin Mellen Press - 2005 - Author: Tommy Boone

*Professional Development of Exercise Physiology.* ISBN: 0773473807 - Hardcover - Publisher: The Edwin Mellen Press - 2001 - Author: Tommy Boone