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## Helping People Overcome Barriers to Exercise Through In-Office PT Exercise Evaluation Referrals

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# Helping people overcome barriers to exercise through in-office PT Exercise Evaluation referrals

South Burlington Family Medicine

Matthew Brandt, March 2021

# Problem Identification

- According to the CDC exercise is one of the most important health interventions available, with both short-term and long-term benefits, particularly for people with chronic disease
  - Benefits: [1]
    - Lowers risk of Cardiovascular disease, Type 2 Diabetes, and certain cancers
    - Has numerous benefits of bone health and reduces risk of fractures
    - Improves symptoms of arthritis
    - Increases independence with ADLs for older adults
    - Increases life expectancy
    - Improved mental health, sleep, and cognition
- CDC recommends 150 minutes of aerobic activity per week [2]
  - If not, some physical activity is better than no physical activity

# Problem Identification

- Research has identified lack of time, resources, social supports, and lack of confidence/ skill level, and fear of injury as barriers to exercise [3]
- Further, for older adults the barriers of physical limitations, lack of guidance, and limited knowledge of available exercise programs are significant [4]
- Exercise programs tailored for an individual are effective in improving both overall activity and fitness across age ranges [5]

# Cost

- Most Americans don't meet physical activity guidelines [6]
  - 50 % don't meet the 150 recommended minutes per week
  - 33% don't exercise at all
- Leads to \$117 Billion dollars spent annually and 10% of premature mortality [6]
- Only ~60% of adults in Chittenden county meet physical activity guidelines [7]

# Community Perspective

## Physical Therapist

- “getting someone to start exercising, that’s a huge behavior change...meeting with a physical therapist can definitely facilitate a behavior change”
- “people who are nervous about exercising, or don’t know what to do, that increases their comfort, knowing there is a trainer there, also having people there as a community, that’s huge”

## Clara Keegan, MD

- “I think some people just don’t know what to do”
- PT adds knowledge base and time
- Providers have so much to fit into such short appointments, extensive exercising counseling just isn’t possible

# Intervention and methodology

- Effort to increase patient and provider knowledge of exercise evaluation program
  - In-office Physical Therapy offers exercise evaluations to help lower barriers for patients, increase exercise, and improve health outcomes
- Limited time in clinical patient interactions leads to limited ability for adequate exercise counseling
- Poster advertising exercise evaluations hung in exam rooms will increase both patient and provider awareness, lead to more referrals, and in turn increase exercise for patients.
  - Particularly those with identified barriers to exercise and motivation to make behavior changes

# Results/ response data

- Poster hung in exam rooms listing qualifying diagnoses and assessing patient's readiness to change
- By advertising to patients, higher likelihood that the patient is in the preparation phase of behavior change and likely to successfully change behavior [8]
- Doctors and Physical therapists saw it a means of increasing interprofessional care
- Helped provide holistic care to patients to increase their overall health



# Evaluation of effectiveness and limitations

- Primary outcome: Compare number of pre-intervention exercise evaluations to post-intervention referrals
- Secondary outcome: Evaluate percentage of post-intervention referrals that participate in Exercise evaluation
- Limitations:
  - Number of referrals doesn't necessarily correlate to increased exercise for patients
  - While percentage of referrals that participate in evaluations get closer to that metric, continued exercise is more difficult to measure
  - Doesn't measure health outcomes or health care related savings associated with exercise programs

# Recommendations for future projects

- Survey patients to assess who is utilizing the exercise evaluation programs comparing rooms with posters vs rooms without posters
- Follow up surveys for those who utilize to assess the benefits of the exercise evaluation on long term exercise habits
- Track health outcomes for those utilizing the exercise evaluation vs matched controls who don't

# References

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# Do you have trouble exercising?

## Do you want to exercise but are not sure what to do or how to start?

Do you have a condition or diagnosis involving:

- Pain, Balance Issues, Difficulty walking, etc

### **ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT A PT EXERCISE EVALUATION TODAY!!**

How can it help me?

A PT Evaluation would include a history and physical examination (strength, balance, and appropriate outcome measures as well as identification of barriers to engaging in an exercise program.)

It can help get you exercising in a way that is safe and doable for you!

Insurance benefits may apply!