

EXERCISE PRESCRIPTION

Overview

Exercise prescription pertains to both high risk patient groups and lower risk groups.

The high risk group of patients may be defined as those patients for whom exercises can be therapeutic if appropriately prescribed. This group of patients is most commonly, and appropriately, under the care of a registered Physiotherapist. Therapeutic exercise prescription is an integral part of the physiotherapy treatment.

Physiotherapists are skilled in assessment and diagnostic decision making. They are educated to consider the individual as a whole and as such can take into account contra-indications and possible or likely complications which may result from an intervention or treatment procedure. This assessment and diagnostic decision making is essential as inappropriate intervention may have extremely detrimental effects for individual patients. This is despite the sometimes routine appearance of a patient's condition to those with insufficient education.

The lower risk group includes those individuals for whom activities undertaken are consistent with maintaining a healthy lifestyle. While exercise may have some potential dangers, the risks are relatively minor and would apply to all individuals.

Prophylactic exercise prescription as a health promotion activity, or to assist healthy individuals to maintain an active lifestyle, is a growing area of importance. The overall benefits to our society of these activities have been argued for many years. Physiotherapists are also ideally placed to be able to provide this form of exercise prescription. As well as having the required knowledge from their anatomical, pathological and kinematic background, physiotherapists are experienced educators, good communicators and motivators. Their expertise and experience enables them to encourage healthy individuals to participate and adopt active exercise programmes to maintain or improve their fitness and/or lifestyle activities.

The knowledge and skill base required to distinguish between the high risk and low risk groups is extensive. Some individuals are easily identified as high risk. Physiotherapists possess all the skills required to provide these individuals with the most appropriate and effective exercise programmes. High risk patients can be of any age, from any walk of life, seriously ill, permanently disabled, or extremely fit and highly trained. This covers a wide range of people including premature babies, children with chronic disabilities, young people injured at school or playing sport, pregnant women, athletes following injury, people undergoing rehabilitation after motor vehicle or industrial accidents, or those needing help to recover from major surgery, heart disease or stroke.

Difficulties arise when people are incorrectly assessed to be of lower risk and an inappropriate exercise programme causes exacerbation of an underlying pathology or the development of new problems.

Individuals in both high and low risk groups must be assured that the exercise programme prescribed for them is an appropriate, effective and safe programme. By virtue of their education and experience physiotherapists are eminently qualified to assess, prescribe, supervise, monitor and evaluate exercise programmes for both high risk and lower risk individuals.

Disclaimer:

This position statement has been prepared having regard to general circumstances, and it is the responsibility of the practitioner to have express regard to the particular circumstances of each case, and the application of this statement in each case. In particular, clinical management must always be responsive to the needs of individual patients, resources, and limitations unique to the institutions or type of practice. Position statements have been prepared having regard to the information available at the time of their preparation, and the practitioner should therefore have regard to any information, research or material which may have been published or become available subsequently. While the APA endeavours to ensure that statements are as current as possible at the time of their preparation, it takes no responsibility for matters arising from changed circumstances or information or material which may have become available subsequently.

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