

Should Physical Therapists take THE Leading Role in the Wellness/Fitness Industry?



A response from **Matthew J. Taylor, PT, PhD** a leader in the Industry:

Qualifications:

- 1981-1988 US Army Officer, Corporate Fitness, Post Fitness Facilitator
- 1988-1997 High School Sports Therapy Care
- 1994-2003 Owned Taylor PT & Fitness, Galena, IL, an integrated PT/health club.
- 2000 Adapted Fitness for People With Disabilities (PWD) to include offsite health club in a workshop for PWD.
- 2000 "Best of the Best" award winner in new programming from Illinois Association of Rehab Facilities: Wellness for Individuals with Disability.
- Doctorate in transformational learning; President of the Intl. Assoc. of Yoga Therapists, and research symposium founding chairperson.
- National board member, Academic Consortium of Complementary and Alternative Health Care.
- Active Researcher of Mind~Body Science Rehabilitation and founder of a futuristic rehabilitation clinic in Scottsdale.

My Assumptions:

1. The question is really asking, "Should PT's be the leaders in the Wellness/Fitness Industry?"
2. Movement/Action is the ground of physical, mental and spiritual health and wellness. Modern neuroscience's understanding of the complex matrix of human movement reveals this fact with the new technologies of imaging.
3. The Fitness Industry will deliver fitness services efficiently with the lowest cost provider gaining the largest share.
4. Future wellness/fitness challenges will be from a savvier, more demanding and complex client in numbers that will overwhelm the current system's capacity.
5. Physical therapy practice will broaden its scope of practice to embrace a truly integrative biopsychosocial model beyond the biomechanical model of the present fitness industry.

My Position:

Physical therapists should be the leaders in human movement science and practice. Movement with effectiveness and purpose (action) is now understood to involve far more than hardwired motor science and biomechanical prescription, yet that remains our current standard of care. I believe our profession has the potential to lead the breakthroughs in wellness and fitness only if we step up to assume the power of our doctoral level education. We need to leave behind mere exercise prescription for those that have sufficient training to deliver it competently and efficiently (ATC's, personal trainers, exercise physiologists, etc.). Let the multi-billion dollar fitness industry continue to do what I and many other PT's were doing 15 years ago.

Our depth of education in human movement demands a breakthrough into how we effectively deliver care that addresses the full complexity of our future clients. No other profession is positioned to understand and provide care that addresses the transformational change needed to shift behavior. The issues of adherence, accessibility to care, and motivation all require unique, creative interventions developed with the complex client, not a tear-sheet of unrelated repetitive calisthenics. From the "average" person who smokes with brittle diabetes, has HTN, OA, mild depression and neuropathy to the young child with CP in a socioeconomically challenged family, those are people that the fitness industry can't by either training or systems effectively serve. Through our creative use of posture, movement, awareness/proprioception, and breathing the basic sciences of transformational learning suggest we as physical therapists can lead the future generation of innovation in human wellness and fitness science and practice.

Do we have the personal resolve and passion required to break through our tired definitions of wellness and fitness? Will we step out as those before us? When I entered the profession 30 years ago the emerging leaders of the time suggested we should be mobilizing spines (Paris), looking at fascia (Barnes), considering chain kinematics (Gray) etc, and at the time were viewed as radicals. I believe we *can*, we *must*, and we *will* step up. It will take courage, risk and boldness to create what isn't yet. Surely the passion that brought us to physical therapy will also fuel us to bring forth the best in future human movement potential for those in wellness and fitness to follow our lead.