

# Exercise is Medicine®

## Exercise Professionals' Stories from the Field



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# Introduction to Exercise Professionals in the Field



The climate has shifted in health care, moving the focus from volume-based to value-based patient care. This has prompted much change, including a shift towards looking at alternative methods of treatment for a growing population with chronic conditions, aiming to lower costs while improving patient health outcomes. It is in this environment that the role of the exercise professional has become more important and sought after by healthcare providers in serving as an extended member of the healthcare team and having an impactful role in the patient treatment plan.

This handbook provides a number of stories from the field, where exercise professionals have established networks with their local physicians and health systems to serve as a community-based exercise resource to skillfully work with sedentary, at-risk patients. Their insight and real-world experiences have been captured and shared in this book to serve as an example and a valuable resource for other exercise professionals seeking to work with their local healthcare systems.

We encourage you to learn from the practices highlighted by the exercise professionals in this compilation and to adopt their practices in better connecting with healthcare teams in your community.



# Table of Contents

Chalchisa Abdeta ..... 4

Alexis Batrakoulis..... 5

Jane Borgordos ..... 6

LaRue Cook..... 7

Dan DeFigio ..... 8

Mike Hardy..... 9

Carley Siedlecki..... 10

Mary Stauder..... 11

Lauren Stobbie ..... 12

Karen Wonders..... 13



# Chalchisa Abdeta

(Harar Town, Eastern Ethiopia)

## About Chalchisa:

- B.S. in Physiotherapy
- MPH in General Public Health
- Works with clients in need of physiotherapy, therapeutic exercise and physical activity
- Promotes physical activity through social media
- Conducts research on physical activity in all age groups
- Works at Hiwot Fana Specialized Haramaya University Hospital in Harar, Ethiopia



## Describe your work with healthcare professionals:

I closely work with over 20 physicians who refer patients to me. I made regular contact with healthcare providers through my business card and social media.

## How have you established a relationship with healthcare providers?

I established relationships with physicians by keeping communication open and sending patients back to them with written feedback on our work.

## How have you maintained your referral sources?

I have maintained referral sources by communicating on a regular basis through emails or on the phone.

## What have been your biggest challenges?

Having no access to exercise equipment, as it is expensive, and lacking the funds to run physical activity programs for local patients and communities

## What has been the key to your success in working with the healthcare system?

My key to success has been the high quality of patient care I give, conducting research on physical activity, and providing feedback to the healthcare team.

*“Evidence-based, high quality of care and communications with healthcare professionals are essential to helping people.”*

**—Chalchisa Abdeta**



# Alexis Batrakoulis

(Larissa, Greece)

## About Alexis:

- B.S. in Physical Education & Sport Science with an emphasis on Fitness
- M.S. in Exercise & Health with an emphasis on Chronic Diseases
- CSCS, ACSM-CPT, EP-C, EIM Credential Level II; ACE Health Coach, ACE-YFS, SFS, FNS; NASM-CES, PES, WLS
- Director of Personal Training Education at the Greek Aerobics and Fitness Training School (GRAFTS)
- Works as an independent contractor with mainly people with class I and II obesity or controlled chronic diseases



## Describe your work with healthcare professionals:

I have connected with several independent healthcare professionals that believe in the benefits of regular physical activity. I mainly first contacted them through face-to-face communication, and also conducted local market research.

## How have you established a relationship with healthcare providers?

By working with an allied group of professionals: a cardiologist, a clinical dietitian-nutritionist, a physiotherapist, and an exercise physiologist. We work together with each patient.

## How have you maintained your referral sources?

By maintaining positive feedback from patients and instilling confidence and trust in other members of the healthcare team.

## What have been your biggest challenges?

The biggest challenge has been the existence of several myths about exercise and chronic medical conditions, and whether or not a fitness professional can be considered qualified to work closely with patients. The latest research findings are breaking these barriers.

## What has been the key to your success in working with the healthcare system?

There are three things: customized service, professionalism and comprehensive education and certification through both academic degrees and specialized credentials. The biggest key to success seems to be bridging the gap between science and practice during their sessions.

*“The biggest key to success seems to be bridging the gap between science and practice during their sessions.”*

**—Alexis Batrakoulis**



# Jane Bogordos

(Schererville, Indiana, USA)

## About Jane:

- M.S. in Kinesiology from Indiana University
- 17 years' experience working as an Exercise Physiologist in outpatient physical therapy clinics
- 5 years' experience working as an Exercise Physiologist/Wellness Supervisor at Franciscan Omni Health & Fitness (my current work place)
- Credentials: ACSM-RCEP, FAI (Functional Aging Institute) Specialist, CDC's DPP certified (diabetes prevention program), AEA (Aquatic Exercise Association) certification, EIM Credential Level III, AHA certified BLS instructor for CPR, AED, & First Aid

## Describe your work with healthcare professionals:

Clients that I have worked with in the past and am currently working with: Orthopedic, Cardiovascular, Diabetes, Stroke, Cancer, Parkinson's Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, Obesity, Depression, Alzheimer's Disease and more.

## How have you established a relationship with healthcare providers?

I currently receive referrals from about 10-12 providers. Being associated with a hospital helps us advertise our program to the healthcare providers within our network. We're also able to get a few minutes in with the physicians during their monthly meetings. We also advertise in our local newspaper and put our info on social media outlets.

## How have you maintained your referral sources?

As the patients finish our program, we send outcome letters and reports to their healthcare providers. We continue reaching out through mailings, meetings and advertising, which has helped our program grow over the years.

## What have been your biggest challenges?

Our biggest challenge has been getting our healthcare providers to refer on a constant basis. It's been easier to get referrals once we were part of their monthly meetings. And we continue with brochures and literature about our program.

## What has been the key to your success in working with the healthcare system?

One of our biggest keys to our success is our participants seeing health improvements and sharing the information with other people.



*"Finding a way to have consistency with healthcare providers has led to our program's success."*

**—Jane Bogordos**



# LaRue Cook

(Alexandria, Virginia and Vero Beach, Florida, USA)

## About LaRue:

- NSCA Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS)
- Certified Sports Performance and Injury Prevention Trainer (Cincinnati Sportsmedicine Research and Education Foundation)
- Certified Youth Conditioning Specialist (International Youth Conditioning Association)
- Certified Tennis Performance Specialist (International Tennis Performance Association)
- Certified Titleist Performance Trainer (Titleist Performance Institute)
- Board Member of the National Board of Fitness Examiners
- Board Member of the Florida High School Tennis Coaches Association



## Describe your work with healthcare professionals:

I have my own private practice in which I work in a variety of settings: client homes, outdoors, physical therapy clinics, business offices and a private community country club fitness center.

## How have you established a relationship with healthcare providers?

I was actually a patient at both of the healthcare providers from which I now receive patient referrals. Through our professional relationship, the providers discovered my expertise in exercise science and post-rehab training. Through casual conversations, they each came to trust me as a service provider for their patients.

## How have you maintained your referral sources?

I have maintained contact with these providers over time. Additionally, in many/most cases, their referred patients have seen dramatic results, which they have later relayed to the referring provider. I have also followed-up with each referral made to ensure that each provider has a follow-through from me on their patient's progress.

## What have been your biggest challenges?

I think it's hard for any fitness professional to first gain an entry or audience with the medical professional capable or responsible for making referrals. Secondly, gaining their trust in referring patients to you. My resume and past history made it easier for them to want to refer and trust me.

## What has been the key to your success in working with the healthcare system?

I truly think that once each of these providers received very positive feedback from their patients, they became more and more comfortable with my services, skills and knowledge. I've had a wide-variety of health issues referred to me, and in practically all of these cases, improvements have been made. In the case of one of the institutional providers referring to me, I've even been invited to use their treatment facilities to work with their patients AND their professional staff.

*"It's very important to have a trusting relationship with the healthcare provider. You are helping take care of their patients."*

**—LaRue Cook**

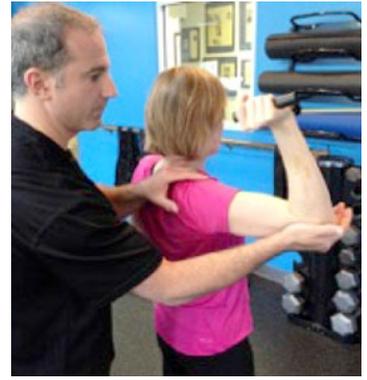


# Dan DeFigio

(Nashville, Tennessee, USA)

## About Dan:

- Certified personal trainer
- Certified sports nutrition counselor
- Works primarily with clients who need corrective or orthopedic rehabilitative exercise
- Owner and Director of Basics and Beyond Fitness & Nutrition ([www.gettingfit.com](http://www.gettingfit.com))



## Describe your work with healthcare professionals:

We work with four healthcare providers at the moment who regularly refer patients to us.

## How have you established a relationship with healthcare providers?

These providers (one Vanderbilt physical medicine physician, one chiropractor, two massage therapists/Egoscue providers) were recommended to me as superior healthcare providers by clients and/or other providers. I reached out to them by letting them know that I was told they were doing an exceptional job in their field, and I'd like to set up a meeting to find out more about how they operate with their clients/patients.

*"In this field, we must provide more than what the average personal trainer gives."*

**—Dan DeFigio**

## How have you maintained your referral sources?

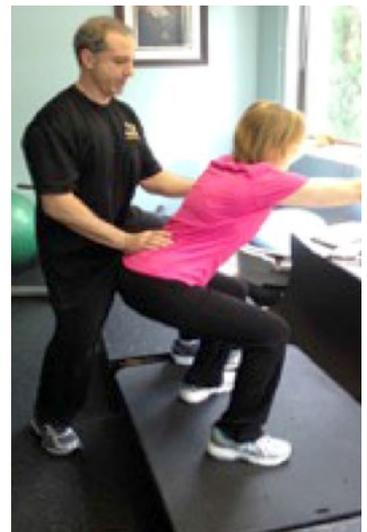
By having great success with the people they send me and by giving referrals back when appropriate.

## What have been your biggest challenges?

The biggest challenge has been overcoming the title of "personal trainer." There is some bias and few patients know what makes a quality exercise professional. I suggest to my referring providers that they describe me as a "postural correction specialist" or an "exercise rehab specialist" to set the tone apart from the typical personal trainer in a gym.

## What has been the key to your success in working with the healthcare system?

Working with exceptional providers who are able to give their patients something no one else in the area can.



# Mike Hardy

(Johns Creek, Georgia, Florida, USA)

## About Mike:

- M.S. in Exercise Science and Rehabilitation from California University of Pennsylvania
- NASM Corrective Exercise Specialist
- ACE Certified Personal Trainer
- TRX Certified Group suspension trainer
- EIM Credential Level 1
- I own and work at a medical exercise studio that provides corrective exercise, medical exercise, personal training, medical massage and therapeutic massage



## Describe your work with healthcare professionals:

I work with an eye doctor, two chiropractors and a physical therapist.

## How have you established a relationship with healthcare providers?

I introduced myself to a couple of the doctors in my building and a couple others were referred to me from current clients. I also belong to the Johns Creek Chamber of commerce and have met a few healthcare providers through networking there. I presented a Powerpoint presentation of a movement assessment and showed them my work. I also explained how we differ greatly from a regular fitness gym, including showing them our degrees and years of experience.

## How have you maintained your referral sources?

I re-assess clients every 6-8 weeks and provide updates on their patient's progress if requested. But a lot of them go back to their doctor, talk about what I am doing with them and how much they have improved. I always ask for as much medical information from my client as their doctor is willing to share, as this keeps the lines of communication open and everything integrated.

## What have been your biggest challenges?

I think some of the biggest challenges had to be getting buy in from doctors who may be more traditional as what is defined as "medicine". The philosophy of preventative versus reactive is slowly coming to fruition, and I believe more doctors will embrace the concept of preventative medicine including exercise as a modality in the years to come.

## What has been the key to your success in working with the healthcare system?

My business plan is more about being in the right place and less about advertising. By placing myself in a professional medical building, it has helped me build more credibility and respect from the doctors. My clients also perceive it as more professional, and associate our facility with post rehab and wellness, and not just a place to come workout, although we offer that too.

*"By placing myself in a professional medical building, it has helped me build more credibility and respect from the doctors."*

**—Mike Hardy**

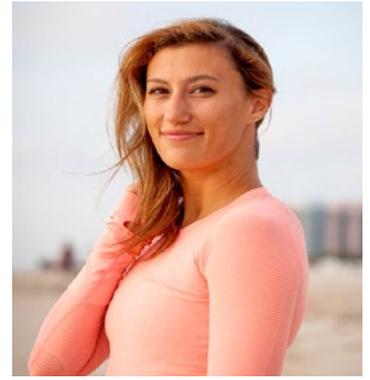


# Carley Siedlecki

(Miami, Florida, USA)

## About Carley:

- B.S. in “Medicine, Health and Society”
- Current Master in Public Health student
- NASM Certified Personal Trainer
- Equinox group fitness instructor
- Private yoga teacher, 200-hr certified power vinyasa yoga teacher
- I manage Ansa Yoga, which is a group of yoga teachers giving private classes to people in the community
- I also coach a community run club sponsored by Baptist Health Hospital



## Describe your work with healthcare professionals:

I work with a physical therapist, chiropractor and ophthalmologist who personal train with me and also prescribe physical activity to some of their patients, to come and see me. Many of my students have back issues, joint issues or high blood pressure.

## How have you established a relationship with healthcare providers?

It started with a conversation about each other’s work. I taught yoga to these healthcare professionals, who saw me as a reliable resource for fitness that could potentially benefit their patients. I still run and do yoga with them while helping their patients.

## How have you maintained your referral sources?

As a team, we see results. I have weekly conversations with the healthcare professionals to help them keep tabs on their recovering patients. We personal train together and refer patients to them when needed.

## What have been your biggest challenges?

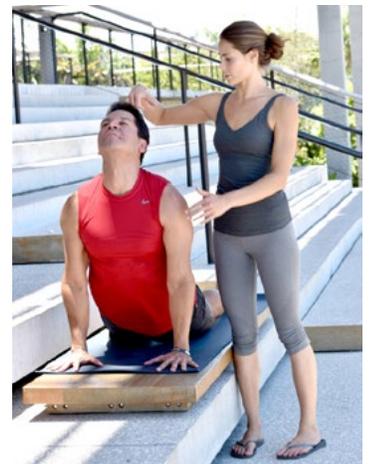
The biggest challenge has been finding yoga professionals that fulfill our credentials. When a new yoga teacher or personal trainer joins our group, I’ve noticed that they have trouble retaining clients, which leads to the clients not getting the physical activity they need.

## What has been the key to your success in working with the healthcare system?

Communication and attention to detail have been essential to working with the healthcare system. They want to know that we know what we’re doing, and they want to see results with their patients.

*“Communication and attention to detail have been essential concepts to working within the healthcare system.”*

**—Carley Siedlecki**



# Mary Stauder

(Sussex, Wisconsin, USA)

## About Mary:

- M.S. in Clinical Exercise Physiology
- B.S. in Exercise & Sports Science with a Fitness Emphasis and Nutrition Minor
- Certifications: ACSM Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist, EIM Credential Level III, NSCA Certified Personal Trainer, ACE Therapeutic Exercise Specialist Certification, and Aerobics & Fitness Association of America Group Exercise Instructor Certification
- Employed at QuadMed LLC
- Work with patients identified to be at a higher risk for cardiovascular disease and those with chronic conditions including: diabetes (type I, II, and gestational), asthma, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, metabolic syndrome, hyperlipidemia, pre-diabetes, obesity with 2 or more criteria for metabolic syndrome, hyperglycemia

## Describe your work with healthcare professionals:

I work with 12 primary care providers, 3 registered dietitian nutritionists, 3 certified diabetes educators, 1 nurse educator and 4 physical therapists.

## How have you established a relationship with healthcare providers?

I introduced the opportunity and vision of utilizing a Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist (RCEP) to the chief medical officer at QuadMed, and he helped me present the program to our clients (other businesses). We routinely talk to our provider “champions” about referrals, protocols and workflows that would impact other providers.

## How have you maintained your referral sources?

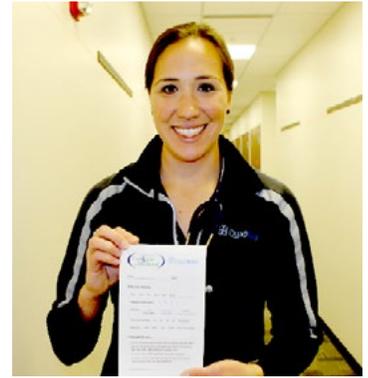
Two factors were critical: effective communication through the launch of the RCEP role, and having program advocates in the form of the regional medical director and provider champion. I knew support from respected physician leaders was critical to give the new program credibility and to gain broader support among the provider group.

## What have been your biggest challenges?

One challenge that I have come across is working with providers who feel that “they can do it all” and may not be used to working in a team environment. Some providers don’t feel comfortable referring patients to others and prefer to tell the patients everything they should do. Pre-exercise participation testing has also been a challenge. We were able to give the provider team guidelines that were less costly than other recommended guidelines.

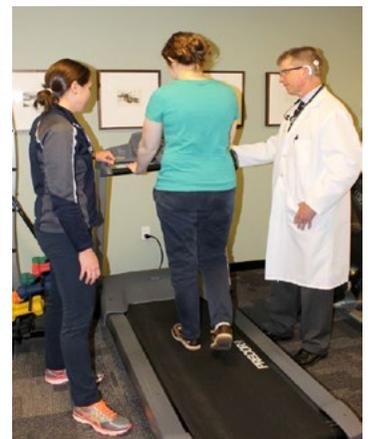
## What has been the key to your success in working with the healthcare system?

The key to success has been consistency—in communication, services and passion. Every patient visit and provider interaction is an opportunity for me to share my services and my passion. If I am confident and excited about my services, my patients and provider team will feel the same. Every interaction I have is an opportunity to leave an impact about who I am and how I approach the work I do—whether I am walking in the health center to greet a patient, documenting a patient’s visit or interacting with the janitor in the health center, I am sending a message to my patients, future patients, or referral source.



*“The key to success is consistency in communication, services and passion.”*

**—Mary Stauder**



# Lauren Stobbie

(Jacksonville, Florida, USA)

## About Lauren:

- M.S. in Exercise Science
- B.S. in Applied Physiology & Kinesiology
- NSCA Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS)
- EIM Credential Level I
- United States Weightlifting Level 1 Coach (USAW)
- Crossfit Level 1 Trainer

## Describe your work with healthcare professionals:

All of the clients I work with are in a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program. While addiction is their primary medical diagnosis, we work with clients with a very wide range of medical limitations and chronic diseases. All patients participate in our 8-week “Health and Wellness” group, where they learn about fitness concepts, nutrition, supplement use, and how to develop their own exercise program. Participants can choose from several activities, including strength training, yoga, conditioning, boot camp-style classes, or one on one personal training.

## How have you established a relationship with healthcare providers?

I work directly with three doctors that manage our client base onsite, as well as an extensive team of ARNPs, physician assistants, and nurses.

## How have you maintained your referral sources?

I work closely with the medical team. It was important to me to not create a “cookie cutter” wellness program. Every person we see has individual needs and goals and their workout program should be structure to meet those specific goals. We have built trust at Lakeview Health. Medical staff is able to see the impact our wellness program has on a daily basis with these patients, helping them reach their physique goals, to rehabbing injuries, to improving their mood and providing better sleep at night. Our patients are our biggest advocates.

## What have been your biggest challenges?

Most of the challenges stem from the client base that I am working with. It’s a challenging population, but has also been rewarding. Many of our clients are dealing with multiple injuries, as well as mood disorders and a wide range of diseases. I have had to take time to learn from the medical and clinical teams and other resources so that I can provide the best care to each one of our clients.

## What has been the key to your success in working with the healthcare system?

The biggest key to success is having open and honest communication with the healthcare providers you are working with. They are experts in their field just as we are experts in our field, and when we work together, we can provide the most success for clients. Also, you never stop learning.



*“Learn from the healthcare providers to enhance your business relationship as well as help more patients.”*

**—Lauren Stobbie**



# Karen Wonders

(Dayton, Ohio, USA)

## About Karen:

- Ph.D. in Exercise Physiology
- FACSM
- Clinical Cancer Exercise Specialist level 2 certified
- ACSM Health and Fitness Specialist
- EIM Credential Level II
- Professor of Exercise Physiology at Wright State University
- Founder and Director of Maple Tree Cancer Alliance



## Describe your work with healthcare professionals:

I work with individuals battling cancer. They range in age from 3 to 94 years old. We receive referrals from every major oncology center and hospital in the Dayton area – approximately 10 organizations.

## How have you established a relationship with healthcare providers?

In several different ways. I initiated contact with some of them that I met at health fairs, others I went into their office to share flyers and discuss our services. I also spoke at Oncological Nursing Society meetings and met several nurses through that.

## How have you maintained your referral sources?

Through constant contact and involving them in what we do. We try to be as visible as possible and have accommodated them on everything they have asked. I send physicians updates on their patients and share the research findings from our organization, and invited some key providers to serve on our Board.

## What have been your biggest challenges?

Finances are our biggest struggle. We operate on a tight budget and survive entirely on donations, fundraisers and grants because our services are provided free of charge.

## What has been the key to your success in working with the healthcare system?

Patient satisfaction is huge, maintaining relationships, keeping up to date involving physicians, and showing that we know what we are doing!

*“Being visible in the community is key.”*

**—Karen Wonders**

