

Meet the EIM Leaders



Name:

Colleen X. Muñoz, PhD

Background:

I completed my undergraduate (2008) and masters (2010) studies at California State University, Fullerton, and my doctoral work at the University of Connecticut (2014).

What is your current work position and title?

Assistant Professor, Department of Health Science and Nursing, University of Hartford

How and when did you get involved with EIM?

Sport and exercise has been an integral part of my entire life. While I have dabbled in many sports, I am religious when it comes to playing volleyball. Sport has provided me a sense of identity, confidence, communication and collaborative skills, and it allowed me to understand physiology and the challenges associated with injury. My passion for sport and physiology directed me towards a career in exercise science. While my research career began by using my knowledge of physiology to improve exercise performance, I now focus more on my knowledge of exercise and others stressors to contribute to our understanding of physiology and how it can be manipulated to promote health.

In 2015 I became a member of the EIM Science Committee, where I am very fortunate to be surrounded by outstanding scientists who meet to discuss the evidence for, identify gaps, and develop ideas and collaborations pertaining to the advancement of EIM and the EIM Solution.

Soon after becoming a member of the EIM Science Committee, I joined EIM staff in their mission to develop the EIM Ambassador Program, where I now serve as co-chair alongside Chad Rethorst. The EIM Ambassador Program trains students and professionals in EIM, exposes them to the latest EIM developments and opportunities, provides them with tools to promote EIM within their local communities and institutions, and aids in their professional development. Jennifer and I piloted the Ambassador Program at the 2015 New England ACSM Fall Meeting with great success. Our team has now delivered the Ambassador training at several regional meetings and the 2016 national meeting, and our team will be traveling throughout the country this year to grow the program. There are currently over sixty Ambassadors who completed the training and successfully passed the exam. They now benefit from receiving EIM updates, webinars featuring EIM experts, and have developed a community that permits sharing of successes, challenges, and ideas.

How do you promote EIM through the work that you do?

I dedicate class sessions to exercise principles and EIM in the courses I instruct. My students have goals to enter a variety of health professions, of which many of the programs (as we all know) do not provide much if any exercise curriculum. Further, I believe this material will put my students a step ahead should

they be employed by a health care institution that already applies the EIM Solution, or perhaps my students themselves will contribute towards EIM implementation in their workplace.

I am currently in the process of adding the University of Hartford to the list of EIM Campuses. Along with the students I work with, we are organizing an official club, sending campus wide announcements to promote physical activity, hosting a campus-wide kickball event, developing a "Walk Across Generations" with older adults in our surrounding community, delivering presentations to teach other campus and non-campus members about EIM, and we are passing out informational flyers on the benefits of exercise.

How has EIM influenced the work you do professionally and those you work with (your patients/clients/colleagues)?

My knowledge of EIM has driven me to expand my research to focus on wider populations (i.e., older adults) and greater clinical relevance (i.e., prevention of chronic disease). While my primary research focus is on fluid balance and dehydration, I am currently developing theories that connect exercise, hydration and long term health outcomes.

Has EIM impacted you personally? If "yes", how so?

Yes, in multiple ways. Because I am not a clinician, I seek alternative ways to give back to my community. Educating and advising students, and participating and promoting EIM serves as my avenue to give back to my community.

On a more personal note, I lost my mother to glioblastoma multiform in Spring 2016, a highly aggressive primary brain tumor with an unknown cause. My mother was dedicated to exercise throughout her adult life; numerous practitioners noted a likely connection between her fitness and ability to withstand treatments, her fight to regain physical strength, and her above average mood state during tough times. Exercise during her battle also served as an outlet, provided a sense of control, and it allowed quality time spent between her and I while assisting her with her physical and occupational therapy exercises.

What are some of the challenges that you have faced in introducing and/or implementing EIM where you work?

Lack of return communication has been my number one challenge in introducing EIM. Nonetheless, persistence does pay off, and speaking to more established faculty has introduced me to other resources and individuals who have returned my communications. While this might be unique to my institution, I have found that communication with the health center, sport/recreation center, and middle administration has not been successful. Rather, I have had success with upper administration. I also found that there was no need to wait for correspondence to get the ball rolling! Students from my classroom and from our pre-med club have really stepped up to action, and I feel strongly that our efforts during EIM Campus Month will aid in more campus-wide support.

What advice do you have for early career professionals wanting to promote and develop careers related to EIM?

Network and put yourself out there! Introduce yourself to people at conferences and familiarize yourself

with photos and basic background information of EIM experts should you come across them in person. Also, take advantage of opportunities provided by ACSM: apply for regional and national committee work, attend EIM talks and trainings, and spend time on the EIM website (there is so much great information to get lost in). Lastly, find others locally and beyond who share your passion for EIM, as great accomplishments frequently require group efforts.