

Meet the EIM Leaders



Name:

Chad Rethorst, PhD

Background:

B.S. in Biopsychology from Nebraska Wesleyan University
Ed.M. in Counseling/Sport Psychology from Boston University
Ph.D. in Kinesiology from Arizona State University
Postdoctoral Fellowship – University of Rochester Medical School,
Department of Psychiatry

What is your current work position and title?

Associate Professor, UT Southwestern Medical Center, Department of Psychiatry, Center for Depression Research and Clinical Care

How and when did you get involved with EIM?

I've attended and presented in EIM sessions at the Annual Meeting for several years. My research focuses on the use of exercise as a treatment for persons with Major Depressive Disorder and other mental illnesses. More recently, my work has moved to in a direction that is very similar to the EIM solution. In 2016, I became co-chair of the EIM Ambassador Program.

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

I am currently working on a project that is implementing depression screening and the Physical Activity Vital Sign in primary care clinics. Patients screening positive for depression, who are not meeting current PA guidelines are eligible for referral to our exercise program for treatment of their depression.

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

Being involved has influenced the research work that I do. Prior to my involvement with EIM, my research focused primarily on the efficacy of exercise in the treatment of depression and the underlying biological mechanisms of the treatment effect. While these are still of interest to me, I have also expanded my research to include examining ways in which exercise can be provided as a treatment for depression in real-world settings.

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

Absolutely. Being involved in EIM is a constant reminder of the importance of physical activity. I think it is important for those of us who work in this area to be good role models for how to maintain an active lifestyle.

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

I share many challenges that most encounter when trying to encourage health care providers to consistently prescribe physical activity to their patients. However, it has become apparent that the evidence supporting exercise as a treatment for depression is much less well-known to primary care providers, compared to their knowledge of the effects of physical activity on other health issues (hypertension, Type 2 diabetes, etc.). This has required providing additional education to providers to assure them that exercise is an effective treatment for their patients.

What are some of the successes that you have seen implementing EIM into your work?

Despite the challenges I described above, we now have many primary care providers who are excited to have the opportunity to provide exercise as an additional treatment option for their patients with depression.

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

Don't get discouraged. Engaging partners (whether it's health care providers, community organizations, or on-campus groups) is hard work and not always immediately fruitful. Be persistent. Also, when talking with these partners always try to focus on what you can provide to them and how you can make their lives easier.