



Disease-specific education and boomer fitness

Lisa Dougherty, founder of the Medical Fitness Network and veteran fitness professional focused on individuals with chronic disease and special populations, shares with us the opportunities in continuing education and niche certifications fitness professionals should consider as they plan their long-term career.

1. What are some of the newer trends in niche continuing education and certifications?

There are 100 million baby boomers (those over 50), that make up about 30% of our population, and three-fourths of America's wealth. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC): 80% of older adults have one chronic medical condition, and 50% have two or more. The most valuable additions a fitness professional can consider adding to his/her resume are specialty certifications and CEU's that offer higher qualifications to work with our aging population.

2. How can fitness professionals take advantage of this trend and help it grow their business or career?

As this baby boomer population ages, we are seeing a significant increase in obesity, chronic disease and individuals with multiple medical conditions. Among the many conditions a boomer client may face are joint replacements, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, obesity, arthritis, Parkinson's, osteoporosis and muscle loss.

Fitness professionals should seek out education companies that offer courses on special populations specifically focused on a deeper education and understanding on these issues.

3. What type of fitness professional do you think would most be interested in pursuing this certification/continuing education?

Fitness professionals who want to have a higher level of knowledge, skill and expertise in working with our aging population are certainly a great fit for this population with disease-specific knowledge. It's this type of education that has the highest growth potential.

The demand for fitness professionals is expected to jump 24% in the next decade according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2012-2013 edition. Additionally, the Handbook states that, "Aging baby boomers, one group that increasingly is becoming concerned with staying healthy and physically fit, will be the main driver of employment growth in fitness workers."

4. What questions might you suggest a fitness professional ask themselves to see if pursuing this trend/opportunity is right for them?

Do I have both the passion and patience in helping those with health challenges to create a better quality of life? Do I want to be part of the healthcare team and take a role in the health and wellness of our aging population?



5. Are there any resources you might recommend that will help give more insight on this trend?

Clients with medical conditions and chronic disease, once thought of as the exception, are now becoming the norm, and they are seeking the best of the best from our industry to serve them. Education companies like Cancer Exercise Training Institute, DSWFitness/Human Kinetics, Fitness Learning Systems, Functional Aging Institute, American Academy of Health and Fitness, the Medical Fitness Network and Geri-Fit are established organizations that are a source for fitness professionals interested in continuing their education and expertise in working with the aging population and more specifically, focused on disease-specific services. ■



Lisa Dougherty is the founder of the Medical Fitness Network. Its mission is to improve the quality of life with those with chronic medical conditions by connecting them to the most qualified fitness and healthcare professionals with a background in treatment or rehabilitation of various diseases and medical conditions. www.medicalfitnessnetwork.org

Certification and continuing education organizations

American Aerobic Assoc. International (AAAI)
www.aaai-ismafitness.com

American Council on Exercise (ACE)
www.ACEfitness.org

National Federation of Professional Trainers (NFPT)
www.nfpt.com

National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA)
www.nasca.com

Savvier Fitness
www.TabataBootcamp.com

SCW Fitness Education
www.scwfitness.com