

ONE LIFE ONE BODY

Be the BEST you CAN BE!

AEP Scope of Practice

Framework for Accredited Exercise Physiologists

Accredited with Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA)

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1.0 The Role of an Accredited Exercise Physiologist (AEP)

Accredited exercise physiologists specialise in clinical exercise interventions for persons at high-risk of developing, or with existing chronic and complex medical conditions and injuries. These interventions are provided by exercise delivery including health and physical activity education, advice and support; and lifestyle modification with a strong focus on achieving behavioural change.

AEPs are recognised allied health professionals displaying a diverse range of knowledge and skills, working across a variety of areas in the health and exercise and sports science fields. As a specialist in this field, AEPs work in areas such as public and private hospitals, primary healthcare within private or multidisciplinary clinics, population health, workplace health, workplace rehabilitation and aged care.

The aims of AEP interventions are to prevent or manage chronic disease or injury, and assist in restoring one's optimal physical function, health or wellness.

2.0 Scope of AEP Practice

Professional practice is influenced by many factors including the context in which practice occurs, individual needs, the practice environment, as well as local and industry policies. The scope of practice that ESSA accepts as reasonable for AEPs to be involved in, is listed in table 1.1 (opposite).

AEPs may also advance their practice through continuing education and experience, or undertake training in specialty fields of practice.

- 2.1 Screening and risk stratifying to ensure the safety and appropriateness of exercise and physical activity interventions;
- 2.2 Assessing a person's 'movement' capacity in people of all ages and levels of health, well-being or fitness;
- 2.3 Development of safe, effective individualised exercise interventions;
- 2.4 Provision of health education, advice and support to enhance health and well-being;
- 2.5 Provision of exercise intervention and advice for those at risk of developing a chronic condition or injury
- 2.6 Provision of clinical exercise prescription, for those with existing chronic and complex medical conditions;
- 2.7 Provision of rehabilitation and advice for patients following the acute stage of injury, surgical intervention, or during recovery to restore functional capacity and well-being; and
- 2.8 The above tasks may occur at any level of primary, secondary or tertiary health care, and may include employment or volunteer work at an individual, community or population health level through various employers or industries.

Table 1.1

3.0 Core Rules, Regulations & Boundaries

AEPs are trained in the assessment and identification of functional, or adverse signs or symptoms to movement. They are trained in the stratification of identified risks; and may complete additional study or certification to provide an extended scope of practice. The training and provision of these services would be external to ESSA and clinical exercise physiology.

It is generally accepted that an AEP with basic training will not:

- a) provide invasive services (except for point of care testing);
- b) provide diagnostic tests or procedures;
- c) perform joint manipulation, massage or ultrasound therapies; or
- d) prescribe pharmaceutical medicines.

4.0 Code of Professional Conduct & Ethical Practice

AEPs must practice in accordance with the association's national codes of Professional Conduct & Ethical Practice. They must also respect and honor standards established through legislation and common law.

5.0 Level of Training

AEPs undertake university studies in the area of clinical exercise physiology and are required to meet an extensive accreditation process that includes practicum experience in a range of settings and environments. It is a requirement that applicants submit an evidence-based practice application to ESSA for assessment of requisite knowledge and application of abilities and skills to gain national accreditation.

6.0 Continued Practice

To ensure the currency of knowledge and experience, AEPs are required to maintain their skills and knowledge by participating in a three yearly re-accreditation process with ESSA. AEPs are required to participate in ongoing education, stay abreast of recent research, maintain

currency in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and Senior First Aid, and contribute to a range of professional accountability activities including teaching, mentoring, and contributing to the industry as a whole.

AEPs are also required to maintain association financial status and professional insurance, renewable on a yearly basis. Continued practice is governed by ESSA's national reaccreditation, continuing education, and professional accountability requirements.

Endword

The scope of practice cannot be defined as a simple list of tasks or procedures.

Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA) have chosen to use a broad, principle-based scope of practice to define the purpose, values and boundaries of an accredited exercise physiologist. By adopting this approach ESSA aims to harness individual competencies, embrace innovative practices and remain sensitive to changes within the health and social care environments¹. This approach ensures the Scope of Accredited Exercise Physiology practice continues to be relevant in an ever-changing health system and ensures that every Australian can benefit from the services provided by accredited exercise physiologists.

References

1. Changes in Healthcare Professions' Scope of Practice: Legislative Considerations. 2006 [cited 12 February 2010]; Available from: www.ncsbn.org/ScopeofPractice.pdf
2. Chronic Disease Management (CDM) Medicare Items. 2009 [cited 6 March 2010]: Available from <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mbsprimarycare-chronicdiseasemanagement>



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