

health club management

AUGUST 2016

No 238

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Activity to save lives

Physical activity will be a clinical priority for GPs for the next three years, with doctors offered training and support to help them get people active. But if fitness – as a subset of activity – wants to benefit, it must up its game

One in six deaths could be prevented by getting the public more active... yet the professionals with the authority and credibility to steer us towards this course of action, namely GPs, "often feel ill-equipped – due to lack of training, time and incentives – to discuss physical activity with patients". So says Dr Zoe Williams, GP clinical champion for physical activity for Public Health England (PHE) and the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP).

Fair to say there are trailblazers out there: the likes of Dr William Bird, with his passion for outdoor activity (see p10), and Dr John Morgan, "the GP who prescribes walking" who hit the headlines back in 2014. But as a general rule, doctors don't feel confident in offering exercise advice, because it was never included in their original training.

This is a gap that urgently needs to be plugged. GPs and their teams deal with 90 per cent of NHS patient contacts, and Ipsos MORI research shows they're far and away people's primary source of advice on how to stay healthy: 57 per cent of people would ask their GP for such advice; only 1 per cent would ask a personal trainer. If GPs could be brought around to a preventative healthcare message, the impact on public health – and the sustainability of the NHS – could be huge.

So there's cause for celebration with the news that the RCGP has made physical activity and lifestyle a clinical priority for the next three years, including training to support GPs in delivering this agenda. Meanwhile PHE's new *Health Matters* report says GPs should exercise themselves, to be role models for their patients, and should mention physical activity in every consultation.

So is this the breakthrough our sector has been waiting for? We've been tantalisingly close before now. After much lobbying, exercise finally

The new national agenda is about physical activity more broadly; if the gym sector wants to be a part of this, it needs to prove it

made it onto the Quality and Outcomes Framework – which rewards GPs for adhering to specified practices – in April 2013, only to be removed again a year later. Meanwhile ukactive has run successful pilots placing exercise professionals in GP surgeries, but as yet no national roll-out. And exercise referral, in spite of being around for decades, remains disjointed across the UK, with only isolated pockets of best practice.

These latest announcements could mark a turning point, but the gym sector has some work to do if it wants to be involved. As Everyone



Activity is on the agenda – but will gyms be included?

Health's Annie Holden told *HCM* recently: "In the health world, people are disdainful of leisure delivering healthcare." (See *HCM* June 16, p44)

Everyone Health has proven its worth in the healthcare sphere, while Nuffield Health (see p32) is a shining example of joined-up thinking, bringing gyms into partnerships with hospitals to deliver wellbeing across the spectrum. But how many more operators can emulate this?

Of course, not every gym has to go down this route. But with gym penetration rates only growing very slowly, the profile of members barely changing, and a flurry of preventative healthcare opportunities suddenly coming our way as reported in this page over recent months – from PHE's healthy lifestyle campaign, *One You*, to inactivity becoming Sport England's priority #1; and from *Healthier You*, the NHS-led diabetes prevention programme, to this RCGP initiative – there's never been a better time for our sector to spread its wings.

So let's put our energy behind upskilling our workforce: EuropeActive is pushing for qualifications at Level 5 and above (see p16), while CIMSPA wants to recognise those with medically-credible skills via a 'Chartered Professional' seal of approval. Let's make gyms more welcoming (see again the inspirational Dr Bird on p10), but also get out into the community. Let's offer GPs free access, so they know first-hand the benefits. And let's develop a model that focuses as much on behaviour change as on fitness and performance.

The new national agenda is about physical activity more broadly; if the gym sector wants to be a part of this, it needs to prove it.

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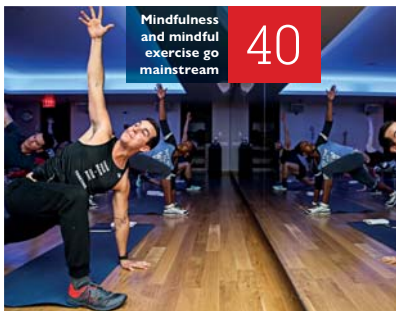
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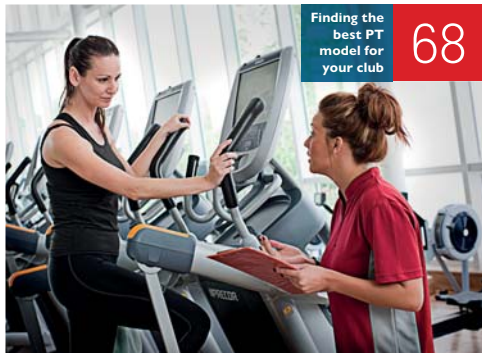
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European Commission: Doctors should prescribe physical activity alongside medicine

Theresa May's cabinet reshuffle and its implications for the leisure industry

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How the Pokémon Go craze is propelling augmented reality into the mainstream

New kinship between the US and Cuba results in a new animal attraction

PEOPLE

“The best way to resist temptation is to not let anything be off limits. Once you start banning foods, you're more likely to crave them”

THE HAIRY BIKERS TV CHEFS SI KING & DAVE MYERS

You've created a Hairy Bikers Dieters Club – why?

We both used to be fairly overweight and we knew we needed to do something about it, so we embarked on a complete overhaul of our diets and activity regimes in 2012 – and we lost over 6 stone between us!

After losing weight ourselves, we wanted to share what we had learnt and we decided that setting up our own Diet Club would be the best way to do it.

What's special about it?

It's a diet that doesn't feel like a diet. We've included the sort of classic, hearty meals you'd expect from the Hairy Bikers, but we reduce the amount of sugar and fat.

We find the best way to resist temptation is to not let anything be off limits. Once you start banning foods, you're more likely to crave them. We also understand that now and again, everyone falls off the healthy eating wagon.

It's more about understanding the amount and type of food you should put into your body, and about striking a balance. If you reduce the amount of calories you put into your body and increase the amount of energy you expend, that's the perfect equation for weight loss.

We've had thousands of members join since it launched at the start of 2014 – people who have reached their goals, kept it off and improved their health in the process.

How does your diet club work?

When members sign up to the club, they receive all the tools they need to help them lose weight. Included are over 200 menu plans and 400 exercise programmes, plus a whole range of exercise videos – there's something for everyone. There's also an online leaderboard where you can monitor how well you're doing.

Everything you need is online, but we also have a dedicated customer support team who you can contact over the phone should you wish to speak to someone. There's also an online community forum, which allows you to message other members in a supportive group setting and ask any questions you might have. Everyone in the forum is going through a similar journey and people are generally very happy to share tips and guidance.

In fact, we actively encourage people to sign up together for a special buddy bundle, where they compare

weight loss with each other through the leaderboard and motivate each other to keep going. Members also receive a video message from us every month as further motivation and a way of saying thanks for all their effort.

How important is exercise in your diet club?

We recognise that weight loss is most successful when you combine good nutrition with an increase in activity. Not everyone is a fan of going to the gym, but there are many ways you can move more to help with weight loss – which is why we've included a whole range of exercise videos on our Dieters Club website.

When we were losing weight, we both bought bikes; we look a bit daft in shorts, but we soon got over it as it's a great way to keep fit. Dance classes such as Zumba – as we know from Dave's *Strictly Come Dancing* days! – are also great forms of exercise. For those who prefer something a little gentler, how about going for a walk around town, doing some gardening or housework?

What are your plans for the club going forward?

We're keen to grow the member base even further in 2016 and, with our fourth cook book just launched, hope to provide our diet club members with even more recipes. We'd also love to partner with a health club operator who shares our approach to health and weight loss.





Si King (left) and
Dave Myers (right)
just published their
fourth diet cookbook



Activity has to be a by-product rather than the end in itself. It must be social, fun and have a purpose



DR WILLIAM BIRD CEO, INTELLIGENT HEALTH

► What's the ethos of Intelligent Health?

We focus on building communities with activity at the heart of things. It isn't just about health: if you have an active society, you have more volunteering, more people in the streets and the parks being connected with each other. People feel safer, there's less antisocial behaviour... Essentially, an active society is a society we want to live in.

But to get new people into being active, activity has to be a by-product rather than the end in itself. It must be social, fun and have a purpose.

Can you give an example?

Our Beat The Street project is a perfect example. It isn't 'physical activity': it's nothing to do with step count, 150 minutes a week or diabetes prevention. It's a game.

You have a smartcard which you tap onto sensors – hundreds of which are built around the area, about half a mile apart – whenever you walk to school or the park or the shops. Every time you connect two beat boxes, you get 10 points that go to your team.

Each project runs for seven weeks and the winning team gets £1,000 – although we've found people aren't as motivated by the prizes as by the fun of the game itself.

The seven-week timeframe is very important: any shorter and you don't have enough time to create a habit in people; any longer and you get people who become dependent on the extrinsic reward of tapping the box, whereas we want them to quickly start thinking about doing their own thing.



All primary schools in Newham are taking part in Beat the Street

We target deprived areas of the UK – we're in east London at the moment – and we give out smartcards to virtually every single child in that area. Every primary school in Newham is taking part, for example.

Is it only for kids?

Not at all. Most GP practices have the smartcards too, as well as many of the community centres and libraries. However, it tends to be through the kids that we capture the adults – the kids get their parents and grandparents involved. In fact, 'spending time with friends and family' is one of the main benefits we hear from participants; in many cases, it's even more important to them than the fact they feel healthier.

How many people take part?

We generally aim to get 30,000 to 40,000 playing by week two or three, and typically get almost a million smartcard swipes in the space of seven weeks – so around 20,000 a day. At a minimum, we'll get 10 per cent of the community involved – and interestingly, 20 per cent of our participants have long-term conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.

How do you know about participants' health conditions?

Although the process is all anonymised, we have a lot of data about the participants, all of which is linked to the ID chips in their smartcards.



Bird: Why can't gyms sell memberships based around outdoor walks?

We're able to show how, before a Beat the Street project starts, on average 35 per cent of the community will be active. By the end of the seven weeks that goes up to 45 per cent. A year later, it's still at the same level – those people are still being active. We create a habit and then we signpost people into other activities, which can range from Zumba to nature walks.

We're also introducing a facility whereby, after the seven weeks is up, local fitness providers can swipe people's smartcards on their NFC phones to track attendance. If they can show lots of attendees who were previously inactive, or who have health conditions, they may be able to get NHS funding.

What are your plans for Beat the Street?

Last year we had 175,000 people playing Beat the Street in areas around the UK. This year we're on track for about 300,000 people. We've also run it in Poland, Italy, Greece, Austria – all run under an EU grant.

What can gyms learn from it?

We get people engaged with activity in a non-scary way and then signpost them towards other fun activities. If operators want people to choose the gym, they have to put the enjoyment back into their offering. Gyms have to start where people are, not where they want them to be. Why does membership have to mean going to the gym? Why can't gyms offer memberships based around health walks outdoors, for example? ▶

The winning Beat the Street team wins a £1,000 prize





**Co-founder Oleg Fomenko
with the Sweatcoin app**

PHOTO: REUTERS/PALL HACKETT

We hope lower health insurance premiums could be offered in exchange for Sweatcoins

OLEG FOMENKO **CO-FOUNDER, SWEATCOIN**

► **What is Sweatcoin?**

Sweatcoin is a free iPhone app, available in the UK, which went live on 5 May 2016. It securely records your outdoor movement and rewards your activity with Sweatcoins – a digital currency – so you're getting paid to be physically active. The idea is to get people past that initial sense of inertia and give them a reason to be active right now.

How does it work?

Every 1,000 steps gives you one Sweatcoin, which can be collected and traded in for rewards – from vouchers for Wonderush or fitness classes at BOOMCycle, to products such as Kymira infra-red clothing and Vivobarefoot running shoes. For example, 45 Sweatcoins – equivalent to 45,000 steps – gets you a free yoga lesson, 200 Sweatcoins gets you a fitness tracker from Fitbug, and 300 gets you 80 per cent off a pair of Vivobarefoot shoes.

We're also creating a peer-to-peer marketplace where anyone can make an offer of a product and service in exchange for Sweatcoins – i.e. for other people's movement. Parents can also peg kids' pocket money to their physical activity levels, so it becomes a whole family affair.

How can you be sure it's accurate?

We've used complex software to measure movement and location to prevent cheating, and we tracked 1.5 billion steps to refine our platform and proprietary algorithms.

The digital currency can't be generated by shaking your iPhone or placing it on top of a washing machine, and we cross-check data on activity and location to verify steps.

What has uptake been like?

More than 20,000 people have already installed the app, with more than 10,000 using it daily. We're now in conversations with a number of businesses to organise corporate wellness trials, where employees can earn benefits and perks like extra days off, subsidised healthy meals or massages.

We've also spoken to all the major health insurers, but the first step is to prove Sweatcoin can attract users. In the long run, we'd hope that unique products or lower health insurance premiums could be offered in exchange for verified physical activity in the shape of Sweatcoins.

For now, we aim to encourage Londoners to be active. So far we're seeing three daily visits per person, with over 70 per cent still active at the end of the first month.

Any plans to further evolve the product?

Work has accelerated since we've gone live. We'll continue to improve our movement verification algorithms, and we're also working on the Android version of the app.

What are your long-term aspirations for Sweatcoin?

By making Sweatcoin truly valuable – accepted by many companies for their goods and services, with an exchange rate linked to Sterling – we want to help people realise the value of movement, and become fitter and happier.

It would make a lot of sense for the NHS to start buying Sweatcoins from the public to encourage people to be more active, reducing the cost of inactivity to the NHS. ●

Edited by Molly Meyer

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Do you have a strong opinion or disagree with somebody else's views on the industry?

If so, we'd love to hear from you – email: healthclub@leisuremedia.com

A partnership for active workplaces

Your recent workplace wellness article (see HCM July 16, p50) highlights the fantastic work being undertaken by a range of employers who, with a growing evidence base, are realising the benefits of an active workforce. Inactivity has a huge impact on the health of employees and the economy, and more employers can follow the excellent examples featured in your article.

CSP Network is keen to help employers get their workplaces moving with our own Workplace Challenge. We're asking for employers' support to change the way we work in the UK, by introducing flexibility into the working day. This isn't about creating new rules and formal policies. Instead, we're urging employers to consider their workplace culture and – if it's creating sedentary, unhealthy behaviours – to encourage their employees to be active in and around the working day by adopting simple steps outlined in our manifesto... making it fun, creating challenges and so on.

We have evidence to show that this shift in culture could not only improve the wellbeing of the working population, but also save businesses across England an estimated £2.8bn.

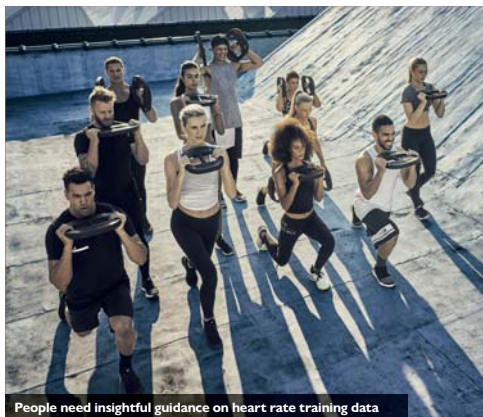
Thousands of businesses have already become active with the help of the County Sports Partnerships (CSPs) and the Workplace Challenge, providing inspiration and opportunities for employees to become more active. We're now reaching out to organisations that wish to work in partnership to develop a compelling workplace physical activity and employee wellbeing programme across England. Find out more at www.workplacechallenge.org.uk



Lee Mason
CEO, County Sports
Partnership Network



Simple steps can greatly improve staff health



People need insightful guidance on heart rate training data

HR training: just one factor in delivering results

Is heart rate training the magic bullet to help all members get results? This question was asked in a recent feature in *Health Club Management* (see HCM July 16, p66) – and it's such a specific question that the answer has to be 'no'.

However, do people achieve results if they train in the right heart rate zone, with an effective and balanced programme and a balanced nutrition plan? Yes.

It's also been proven that, when wearables are used in a group, they create cohesion – which in turn improves member retention.

Working out at the correct heart rate is therefore an important part of our programmes. For example, GRIT – our HIIT programme – has been widely recognised by global research institutions to be a true HIIT programme, due to the specificity of the rest intervals built in to the music and choreography.

The real question, as the tech revolution continues to gather pace, is how operators best incorporate HR training. Customers want insightful guidance – they don't just want their data to pile up in yet another training diary. They also expect the data to be accurate and the technology discreet and easy to use.

We've partnered with Polar, as its heart rate monitoring devices and Polar Flow app offer guidance for improvement, as well as logging results and tracking progress.

We encourage all customers to embrace heart rate training. But it isn't a magic bullet: programming and motivation for the individual remain at the core of success.

Martin Franklin
CEO,
Les Mills UK





EuropeActive has set Level 5 standards for pre-diabetes

► Level 4 not enough for specialist interventions

The editor's letter in HCM

May – on the topic of the new Healthier You diabetes prevention programme – rightly posed the question of whether the fitness sector can step up to the mark to engage positively in the interventions being planned by the NHS in 27 locations across the UK.

This programme needs exercise professionals with higher skills in the specialist area of pre-diabetes training – a huge opportunity for REPS UK and CIMSPA to have put into place a positive response to support their high-achieving members to gain a qualification in this area, and with it a route into the delivery teams.

Based on some excellent work already underway in the Netherlands, EuropeActive has developed Level 5 training

standards for pre-diabetes – standards that are recognised by the European Register of Exercise Professionals (EREPS). Hopefully it isn't too late for the responsible people at REPS UK and CIMSPA to also embrace this, encouraging members to attain this Level 5 knowledge to gain the respect of other health professionals who will be delivering the Healthier You programme.

EuropeActive has also put into effect a graduate entry programme through EREPS at Level 6, and invites the UK fitness sector and its leading exercise professionals to become more involved.

Cliff Collins
Programmes
director,
EuropeActive



One organised sector voice is crucial

If we truly want to see the sport and physical activity sector in the UK evolve and become not only inspirational but aspirational, we need the organisations that represent us to be fully aligned.

We need to ensure that those already working in the sector, as well as those considering it, are 100 per cent clear on what the available pathways are – and that we're equipping people with the right skills.

Clarity is also vital if we truly want to inform and influence the way in which governments, education bodies, citizens and health boards understand and support us.

CIMSPA and SkillsActive have to work together to enable decisions to be made, and to develop a collaborative and cohesive body that represents, informs and supports us. If they cannot work together then we must, as a sector, rally behind one voice.

CIMSPA is gaining momentum because the message it's delivering to the sector is not only what it wants, but also what it needs. SkillsActive is almost non-existent at present and has delivered no reassurances to the sector, or anything of value, in recent months or years. Frankly it has become a distraction to us all.

The next few years are crucial as funding, apprenticeships and associated long- and short-term skills shortages are negotiated and hopefully resolved.

We need one set of recognised qualifications and standards, one body that accredits and monitors, one skills strategy. We need one set of guidelines and one place to go when we need to understand latest legislation or changes in policy.

Either the two bodies will have to work closer together and come to some agreement on the way forward, or the decision will be made by employers and providers voting with their feet.

Gary Denton
Director, Icon Training



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International news

New health club brand for Denmark

A new health club brand, REPEAT, is due to launch in Denmark in September, with the inaugural two clubs opening that month – in the capital Copenhagen and the country's third-largest city, Odense.

The new operation is the brainchild of serial fitness entrepreneur Rasmus Ingerslev – it's his third health club chain, having formerly founded both fitness dk and Fresh Fitness.

The name REPEAT comes from the idea that it's repetition – creating a habit – that will make you successful with your exercise and drive you towards achieving your goals. With this in mind, the brand has been developed around not just customer satisfaction, but customer enjoyment – helping people find their passion for exercise.

"We've focused 100 per cent on what our core audience wants and built our concept around that," says Ingerslev. "If people leave our clubs because they haven't enjoyed the experience, we haven't done our job. We want to become a brand that people love."

"We're fully aware that REPEAT won't be huge in Denmark with this approach due to demographics, but we'd rather do 10–15 really great clubs on home turf and then see if we can expand abroad."

All clubs will open 24/7, with a wide variety of cardio and strength equipment, free weights and functional training. There



REPEAT team Peter Rehloff, Ingerslev, Peter Modin and Hans-Henrik Sørensen

will be separate virtual studios designed to match the type of classes offered: mind-body and high intensity (HIIT) classes respectively. Ingerslev is also the founder of virtual class provider Wexer Virtual.

Ingerslev continues: "REPEAT will offer the best of all the experience I've gained over the years. It will be super cool."

Think of a trendy café with a raw design, industrial elements and loud music, a bit Soho-ish, rather than a traditional health club. It will be an environment where

Millennials and those young-at-heart will feel at home and want to train."

Flexibility and transparency will also be key: although the new clubs will sell memberships – priced at 39 DKK (£4 / €5) a week for unlimited attendance – people can also choose to pay per visit. A one-off visit will cost the same as the weekly rate.

The clubs will be cashless, with access, purchases and membership management all done by members through an app.

Details: http://leisr7a=ggA8B_H

Kaia FIT building a "community for women"

US-based women-only fitness chain Kaia FIT has opened its latest club in Santa Clarita, California, bringing the total number of sites to 56.

Based on a franchise model, Kaia FIT is marketed as an all-inclusive lifestyle system, composed of year-round group fitness and nutrition programmes "designed for women, by women".

Developed by fitness entrepreneur Nikki Warren, memberships include physical assessments, meal plans, nutritional guidance, and the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles by being a part of a team.

Exercise is offered through a range of group programmes such as Brik – a six-week boot camp which includes fitness assessments – and Core Sessions, which focus on maintaining and building on the accomplishments achieved by members during the Brik programme.

There's also group training for those wanting to prepare for triathlons or 5k and 10k runs, as well as the more holistic Kaia Flow, which combines mind and body with a power yoga and core strengthening alongside pilates-style techniques.

Suppliers include ELIVATE and EZ Flex Sports Mats.

"Kaia FIT provides more than just a place to work out," says Warren. "Rather, it's a guided holistic approach to health focused on results, camaraderie and commitment."

"We're a community. We offer friendship, support, nutrition and a safe place for women."



Kaia: Programmes designed by women, for women

Kaia FIT aims to attract women of all ages and levels of fitness, with introductory rates of less than US\$100 for the first month, followed by monthly memberships of US\$129. Details: <http://leisr7a=c2V3N>

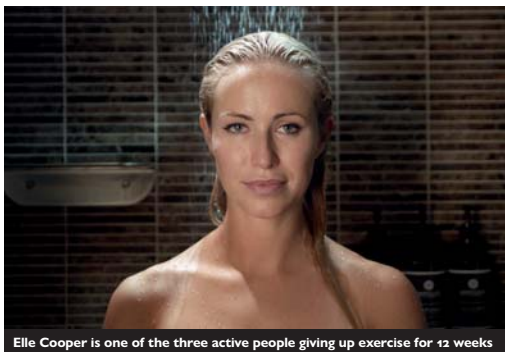
Fitness First Australia to highlight “life changing” benefits of fitness

Fitness First Australia has launched a social experiment which will investigate the effects of fitness on a human being beyond physical improvements.

The study will examine how “fit” feels over a 12-week period, as three fitness fanatics remove exercise from their lives, while three inactive people add exercise to theirs. The journey will be documented in a four-part video series from the one intimate environment where everyone goes to after a workout – the shower.

As the intention is to go beyond the traditional ‘before and after’ photo, however, the focus will be on how the participants emotionally evolve, so bodies will never be shown.

Fitness First Australia’s national fitness manager, Mick Cunico, says: “We know that sweating it out in the gym and looking your best is only part of the



Elle Cooper is one of the three active people giving up exercise for 12 weeks

exercise story. But many people are dismissing the feeling that exercise brings.

“We want to start a conversation about just how good fit feels.”

Cunico will also be one of the fitness fanatics giving up exercise for 12 long weeks as part of the experiment.

“I’m curious to discover what impact restricting my movement has on me emotionally,” he says.

“I can anticipate that those of us giving up exercise may start to feel lethargic and less focused, but I’m also eager to see how the lives of those embarking on an exercise routine begin to change as they encounter benefits such as more energy, mental clarity, confidence or a better outlook on life.”

To follow the experiment, visit: howfitfeels.fitnessfirst.com.au
Details: <http://lei.sr?a=i7y1A>

Fabryka Formy launches new budget format

Polish full-service fitness chain Fabryka Formy is expanding its offering by launching a chain of budget clubs.

The first low-cost club – operating under the newly established Step One brand – opened at a retail and shopping complex in the city of Poznan in April. This will be followed by further sites at Bydgoszcz, in August, and Piotrkow (date to be confirmed).

The first site in Poznan has recently been kitted out by Core Health & Fitness, including new Star Trac cardio, Inspiration strength and StairMaster’s AirFit UB and AirFit Bike.

In addition to dedicated CV and strength areas, the club offers a free weights area, fight zone and a 200sq m group exercise space offering a number of classes, including Les Mills programmes such as CXworx and Shbam. Personal training is also available.

Each Step One club will be open 24 hours a day, with pre-sale membership priced at 59 Polish zlotys (around £11.50 / €13.50) a month, increasing to 69 zlotys after opening. The development of the chain will be headed by Pawel Ciszek.
Details: <http://lei.sr?a=UoA8s>



Step One has a 200sq m group exercise space

Anytime Fitness named top global franchise

Gym chain Anytime Fitness has retained its title as the world's leading franchise as the US company seeks to crank up international growth, particularly in the UK.

For the second year running, Anytime Fitness – which recently launched its 3,000th site in Stroud – has been ranked number one on Entrepreneur magazine's annual Top Global Franchise list. The gym franchise topped a list of 500 companies by scoring highly based on system size, growth rate and financial strength and stability.

Much of Anytime's recent growth has been driven by the UK market, where the company recently sold its 300th territory, just six years after launching. There are currently 88 clubs trading across Britain, with a further 107 in the opening and negotiating pipeline. Anytime Fitness UK general manager Brett Edwards is aiming for ambitious growth and hopes to have 550 clubs open by 2020.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=B7f4j_H



Olympic champion Anthony Joshua

Anthony Joshua to front activity campaign

Champion heavyweight boxer Anthony Joshua has been announced as the latest high-profile athlete to front a forthcoming campaign to encourage the nation to become more active.

Joshua will be the face of forthcoming Lucozade Sport campaigns to promote physical activity. The signing of the Olympic gold medalist comes just weeks after Spurs striker Harry Kane was also named as an ambassador.

Joshua revealed he was eager to support the campaign as inspiring a more active nation is a mission close to his heart. "Everything I have achieved originates from a strong foundation of fitness and I pride myself on working hard in and out of the ring," said Joshua.

"I'm excited to have the opportunity to share with others how to get the most out of their bodies."

Details: http://lei.sr?a=MgV5j_V_H

Mid-market to fight back?



Fitness First has a strong presence in London, where DW Sports is eager to expand

The potential takeover of Fitness First UK by Dave Whelan's DW Sports would mark the start of a mid-market fightback against the rise of the budget clubs, according to a well-placed source.

The two companies are in talks over a *Eyom+* buyout to create a 140-strong gym chain to rival the might of Pure Gym, which has become the UK's largest operator with more than 150 clubs. Pure Gym and The Gym Group have driven health and fitness sector growth in recent years, as once mighty mid-market brands such as LA Fitness and Fitness First have struggled to compete.

With DW Sports boasting a strong selection of northern locations and Fitness First having a significant presence in affluent areas of the south – particularly London – a successful merger would see the UK's second largest health club chain boast an enviable spread of sites. It is understood that these geographical differences between DW and Fitness First would also reduce the likelihood of scrutiny from the Competition and Markets Authority, which previously proved the downfall of a proposed merger between Pure Gym and The Gym Group. Details: http://lei.sr?a=BgNzx_H

Pure Gym puts IPO on hold

Pure Gym is to put its planned IPO on ice amid the ongoing market turbulence caused by Britain's vote in June to leave the European Union.

The UK's largest private gym chain has been gearing up for a summer listing, which would potentially have seen the company valued at more than £500m. However, *Health Club Management* understands that the IPO has now been put on the back-burner until the markets settle down in the wake of the Brexit vote.

As reported in January, Pure Gym has been considering following its budget rival The Gym Group onto the stock market for some time. Having taken control of the gym chain three years ago, US private equity firm CCMP Capital Advisors has hired the investment bank Rothschild to review options for cashing out on its investment, with investment banks Jefferies, JP Morgan and Credit Suisse reported to be handling plans for the IPO.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=q6v5Z_H



Pure Gym is steered by CEO Humphrey Cobbold

Treharne: 'Brexit, no worries'

The economic fallout from Britain's historic vote to leave the European Union isn't causing any sleepless nights for The Gym Group, according to the company's CEO.

John Treharne believes the gym chain he founded in 2008 is well-placed to weather any resultant financial storms, pointing to the company's rapid rise during the last global recession as evidence of its durability.

"Fundamentally, there's no reason why Brexit should impact on our business – we don't trade with Europe and we don't trade in euros. Yes we buy some products from Europe, but that's not really a problem," Treharne told *Health Club Management*.

"People ask 'what happens if the economic climate deteriorates?' There's no guarantee that it will happen, but if it did, low cost businesses have already demonstrated their ability to trade strongly, both in strong and weak economic climates. It certainly doesn't keep us awake at night."

Treharne said his gyms do employ a fair share of workers from the European Union, but believes the UK's wide pool of young, physical activity sector talent means any possible, future changes to employment regulations would not have a material impact on the gym chain.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=W7X8T_H



CEO and founder John Treharne took the chain onto the stock market late last year

GPs told: Make physical activity a clinical priority



The ruling could increase GP referrals

The Royal College of GPs (RCGP) has announced physical activity and lifestyle as one of its clinical priorities for the next three years, becoming the latest influential body to elevate the importance of tackling sedentary behaviour (see p3).

The RCGP has identified promoting physical activity as a clinical priority for GPs, who deal with 90 per cent of NHS patient contacts. The announcement will see physical activity given greater prominence by GP practices.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=W7X8T_H

Bannatyne scraps IPO plans

The Bannatyne Group has ditched plans for a partial IPO and is now reassessing its options for raising capital to fuel growth.

The business had been lining up a £300m float on London's Alternative Investment Market (AIM). However, it's understood that market officials expressed concerns over the personal history of company owner Duncan Bannatyne.

In November last year, a judge ruled that Bannatyne had provided false evidence in a divorce case.

Reports had suggested that Bannatyne would stand down from the board to enable the float to go ahead, however *Health Club Management* understands that the gym chain decided against this course of action.

A spokesperson said: "The Board of Bannatyne Group has decided that it



Duncan Bannatyne launched Bannatyne's Fitness in 1997

will not list on AIM at this time. We have many options available to enable us to continue our growth operating as a private company."

Details: http://lei.sr?a=uq97x_H

Argos to partner National Fitness Day



Last year, 2,000 venues opened their doors to run free exercise sessions

Argos has been announced as the lead partner for National Fitness Day (NFD) 2016, with the retail giant set to significantly spread the reach of what is described as the "most active day of the year."

NFD organiser uactive has announced Wednesday 7 September for this year's event, coinciding with the opening ceremony of the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games which will be attended by cross-party peer and uactive chair, Baroness Tanni-Grey Thompson.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=P8p6T_H

Sport England: *This Girl Can* to run until 2020

Sport England has committed to investing in its *This Girl Can* campaign for at least another four years, after recording a spike in participation figures.

According to the quango's 2015-16 annual report, its board has agreed to persevere with the campaign until 2020, subject to permission from the DCMS.

In 2015-16 Sport England spent £3.1m on the campaign – which launched in 2014 – with £2.7m going on marketing spend.

The report highlighted the traction gained by *This Girl Can*, with a quantitative survey conducted by TNS/BMRB finding that 2.8m women had participated in physical activity as a result of the campaign, with 1.6m of those claiming that they had started, or restarted, exercising.

Sport England's latest Active People Survey recorded 148,700 more women being active for at least 30 minutes once a week, every week.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=F2sqN_H

£117bn leisure sector grows quicker than retail



People are spending more on gyms

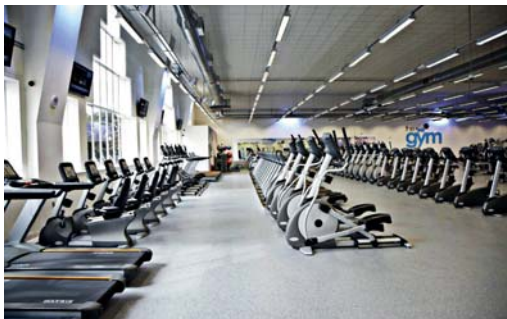
The UK leisure market is now worth £117bn in annual revenue and is growing nearly twice as quickly as the retail sector, according to a new report from Deloitte.

The *Passion for leisure: A view on the UK leisure consumer* document finds that the leisure industry has made healthy progress in the wake of the global recession, with annual growth of five per cent since 2010.

Based on economic data and a survey of 3,000 UK consumers, the report highlights increased appetite for habitual leisure activities such as going to the gym and eating out. It also flags a growing preference towards spending on experiences over products.

"A confluence of factors, including low inflation and high employment levels, has boosted consumers' spending on leisure," said Simon Oaten, partner at Deloitte.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=f5X4n_H



The Gym Group plans to open between 15 and 20 new clubs in both 2016 and 2017

"Put fitness on high streets"

The boss of the UK's only listed gym chain has called on planning authorities to reconsider the role that gyms have to play in creating healthier and resurgent high streets.

The Gym Group CEO John Treharne told Health Club Management that fitness operators can bring huge benefits in terms of employment, footfall and health, at a time when many of the country's high street businesses are struggling to survive.

"It's a slow process, but planning authorities should be considering the benefit to local people from more gyms on the high street," said Treharne, who added that each

Gym Group site brings around 20 jobs when you include personal trainers.

"The bulk of our members come from within five minutes of our sites and particularly where some high streets need regeneration, the fact that we drive high footfall to our sites brings added benefits to other businesses in the same location."

Treharne's comments reflect the sentiments of many club operators, who have found obtaining suitable properties one of the biggest barriers to expansion. Site acquisition is a perennial issue particularly in London.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=M8c7_H

Lazy holidays harming kids

Lazy summer holidays are leading to a significant drop-off in schoolchildren's fitness levels and hampering efforts to reverse the UK's physical inactivity epidemic, new research suggests.

The study from the UKactive Research Institute found British schoolchildren are losing 80 per cent of fitness gained during term time due to sedentary school holidays. More than 400 children taking part in the My Personal Best Challenge developed by

Premier Sport were found to have experienced drop-offs in fitness levels post-summer break, as well as an increase in BMI.

As a result, the study's authors say the government's promise of a £500m cash



Children's BMI increases during inactive summer breaks

injection into school sport through the sugar levy should also be used to provide incentives for children and parents to be active over the summer to counter this drop-off.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=j3c7_H



Network founder Graeme Hinde

Facebook launch for fitness network

A new fitness membership network for sector professionals to share ideas and benefit from trade discounts has launched via Facebook today (12 June).

The National Fitness Network is the brainchild of former club operator and LFX network founder Graeme Hinde, who has brought in fitness entrepreneur and *Apprentice* star Katie Bulmer-Cooke, plus Burnley Leisure head of operations Neil Hutchinson to join him as directors for the new network.

The trio aim to create a community of like-minded fitness professionals and enthusiasts who want to share ideas, as well as receive useful information and deals on trade supplies and training.

"I decided that it was time to give something back, so we're creating a fantastic range of exclusive member offers and discounts," said Hinde.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=d7j8c_H



Work is underway on the health club, which is being designed by Hooper Architects

Upmarket club for Bedford

An entrepreneur in Bedford is planning to launch a new multi-million pound independent health club aimed at the upper end of the market.

Local businessman and racquet sports enthusiast Matthew Towers – who is financing the venture through a combination of personal capital and bank funding – is managing director of The Towers Health & Racquet Club, which is due to open in February 2017.

The new club will offer seven tennis courts (three indoor), four squash courts, a 100-station gym, two dance studios, an indoor cycling studio, a 20m (66ft) swimming pool and a spa. The 500sq m (5,381sq ft) gym

will feature mix of cardio, strength, kinesio and functional equipment, with Towers currently in the process of selecting a supplier.

"We are delighted to be bringing this brand new, state-of-the-art facility to Bedford.

The town has long suffered from a lack of investment in high quality sports and leisure facilities," said Towers.

"While there are a number of gyms in the town, most of these have moved down-market, and there is demand for a new, up-market competitor offering the levels of service expected by discerning gym users."

Hooper Architects are designing the health club, with building work already underway.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=6V5f8_H

Golf Open club gets revamp

Players taking part in the 145th Open Championship, which was brought to its nailbiting conclusion last month, were able to keep themselves in excellent shape thanks to a new gym install at the Marine Hotel which overlooks the 18th green.

Life Fitness has refurbished the Bodysense Leisure Club & Spa the iconic hotel in Troon, South Ayrshire, as part of a £130,000 investment. The gym and fitness suite has been fitted with 14 stations from Life's Discover SE Cardio range including upright Lifecycle bikes, PowerMill Climbers, FlexStrider Variable-Stride Trainers, along with Insignia Series selectorised strength equipment and Lifting Platform.

"I have worked with various equipment manufacturers over the past seven years and

I have always found Life Fitness equipment to be reliable and easily maintained," said Ryan Johnson, leisure manager at the Marine Hotel.

"It has been a great experience to work with Life Fitness who have designed a gym that has exceeded our expectations. The old gym was a great offering for a hotel leisure club but the new gym is more than worthy of the four stars we pride ourselves on."

In addition to the gym and fitness suite, Bodysense Leisure Club & Spa offers a heated indoor swimming pool, sauna, steamroom, Jacuzzi, spa pool and squash courts to hotel guests and members.

The Open Championship took place from 14-17 July, with Henrik Stenson winning the title with a record score of 20 under par.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=y2U3W_H



The famous Royal Troon golf course

TRIB3 ships fitness into local parks

Bootcamp fitness studio operator TRIB3 has launched a new design concept which will bring mobile gyms to local parks, schools and open spaces across the UK and overseas.

The compact gyms are built within a shipping-style container. At the touch of a button, a hydraulic system opens up the gym within 10 minutes, revealing a mini studio with treadmills and workout mats.

The concept was created by TRIB3 and designed in collaboration with architects CODA Studios. The container gyms are equipped by Star Trac and Escape, with lighting by Lightmaster. Additional flooring is available if required, or the gyms can expand out onto the grass of a park.

"This is a completely self-contained, secure and transportable workout system," TRIB3 CEO and co-founder Kevin Yates told *Health Club Management*. "It offers local councils, sports clubs and supermarkets the chance to engage the communities they operate in, by allowing them to maximise the use of their space with no long-term alterations to their facilities."

"It's a real positive for individual personal trainers or operators who want to expand but don't have the capacity internally. If you're an owner or operator wanting to create a new footprint for your business, this could work perfectly in any environment. Leisure operators can also see this as an extension to their social responsibility and parks initiatives."

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

The cost of the mobile gyms have yet to be confirmed, but *Health Club Management* understands an investment of between £35,000 and £55,000 will be required to set one up, depending on whether the container gym is bought or rented.

TRIB3 is currently in negotiations with a major supermarket chain and a number of local authorities, both in the UK and abroad, to install the first mobile gyms. Yates



Hydraulics open up the container gyms at the touch of a button



The mobile gyms are kitted out by Star Trac, Escape and Lightmaster

envisions councils moving the equipment between local parks, with interested users booking tickets through a specially developed app – or potentially even through booking websites like Ticketmaster.

He said: "Part of our mission statement is to 'create world class programming while connecting the community', and we can only do this through designing something

that gives people across all communities the opportunity to exercise in any surrounding."

Aside from the container gyms, nine TRIB3 franchises have been established in more conventional health club spaces since the model was launched in September 2015. Several more sites are expected to open in the coming year. Users are not asked to commit to contracts and can pay as little or as much as they like.

TRIB3 is also collaborating with CODA Studios on a multi-use complex in Sheffield, called Krynkl, which will be built entirely from recycled shipping containers. In addition to a TRIB3 health club, the building will also house a bar and restaurant, offices, a rooftop garden and incubation space for start-ups.

Details: <http://lei.sr?o=8F5W8>



This self-contained, secure, transportable system offers local councils, sports clubs and supermarkets the chance to engage their communities – Kevin Yates

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Technology news

Pokémon GO: Already one of most-used apps

The **Pokémon Go** craze could play a hugely positive role in tackling obesity by encouraging people to get more active.

The new location-based, augmented reality mobile game – developed by Niantic and Nintendo – encourages players to walk and move around, searching and “collecting” characters in order to advance in the game.

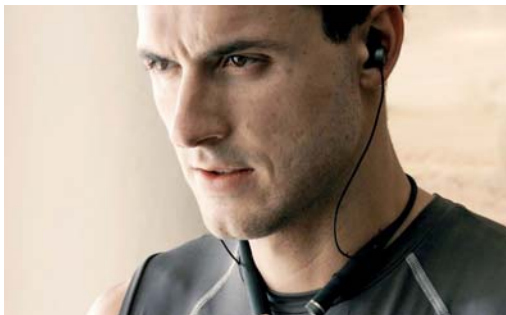
According to web traffic monitor SimilarWeb, Pokémon GO already has more daily active users than Twitter and, if the trend continues, it is poised to take on Snapchat, WhatsApp and other popular social apps. The game has already reached 11 per cent of US Android phones.

Crucially, most players use the app actively throughout the day. Figures show that each player is spending an average of 43 minutes a day, walking and looking for Pokémon.

Details: <http://lei.sr?a=G2wv>



Players “collect” virtual characters



Vi adds an extra element to fitness tracking by applying the data to help coaching

The PT that lives in your ears

A **personal training** product driven by artificial intelligence (AI) is set to shake-up the fitness market, after its Kickstarter campaign smashed past the US\$100,000 target in just 90 minutes.

Developed by Israeli technology firm LifeBeam – which has previously worked with NASA, Samsung and Under Armour – Vi is an AI-driven wearable which harnesses your data to provide customised two-way fitness coaching.

Part fitness tracker, part smartwatch, part PT, Vi applies AI to your workout data, biometrics and goals to coach you through tailored workout plans which it will also adapt according to terrain, weather and location. As well as talking to you, Vi can also play your favourite music (via Spotify and

Apple Music) through its Harman/Kardon-designed headphones and enable you to take phone calls. The product contains a string of sensors and is worn-around the neck, attached to two headphones which relay workout feedback from Vi and a microphone for the user to speak to her.

It also communicates with the user via text message, asking for feedback on mood, sleep quality and body condition, as well as sending motivational notes.

“Part of what we wanted to do with Vi was create an AI unlike any other out there,” said Cliff Chen, LifeBeam creative and experience director. “We wanted her to have a personality with a little more edge to it and one that felt more human, more real.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=s6g2p_H

Les Mills partners with Polar

Les Mills is to embark on a new partnership with wearable tech giant Polar which aims to help fitness fans get the most from their favourite group exercise workouts.

The partnership brings together Polar’s heart rate training guidance with the motivation and results of Les Mills fitness programmes. As part of the tie-up, Polar heart rate monitors are now being used by Les Mills programme directors and trainers to gain added insight into the impact of their workouts against long-term goals.

In addition, the companies will be working together on product development, joint research initiatives and greater integration of Les Mills workout information on Polar devices. Polar will also be a partner for global Les Mills Live events.

“The personalised and adaptive heart rate guidance that Polar provides inspires people to get the most from their workouts,” said Vaughan Schwass, CEO of Les Mills Enterprises. “Team this with Les Mills’ proven workouts and people get the results they desire and continue to fall in love with fitness.”

“Polar prides itself on our rich history of heart rate monitoring, coaching and helping users get the most of any activity,” said Marco Suvalaako, Polar global product director.

“Les Mills inspires millions of people around the world to get moving every week. Blending our heart rate and activity tracking tools with Les Mills’ cutting-edge group exercise classes will help people around the world get active and achieve their fitness goals.”

Details: http://lei.sr?a=W8R3b_H



The Les Mills-Polar partnership will lead to a wide range of joint initiatives



Jordan will supply Hatton Boxing kit

Jordan secures supplier deal with Hatton Boxing

Functional fitness equipment provider Jordan has been appointed as official supplier of all Hatton Boxing-branded equipment and accessories.

The new partnership will see Jordan supply the full range of Hatton Boxing equipment to its trade, independent facilities and distributor network.

All equipment will also be available to purchase from the Jordan Fitness website and will be the sole boxing equipment range offered by the functional fitness equipment specialists. Jordan Fitness will also be one of the first suppliers to offer Hatton Boxing's new Pride in Battle range; developed personally by Ricky Hatton.

"Boxing is no longer confined to the traditional boxing gyms; it's becoming more accessible as a sport and as a means of fitness for all abilities," Hatton said.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=Y4R7R_H



The word 'leisure' did not feature once in the 60-page Post-16 skills plan

Skills reform: leisure snubbed

Government plans for a major shake-up of Post-16 vocational education have been met with disappointment from the leisure industry, after the newly-proposed routes into skilled employment appeared to overlook the sector.

Skills minister Nick Boles has tabled plans to remove thousands of "ineffective courses that short-change employers and young people" and replace them with 15 routes into technical employment covering key industries. The reforms are based on a report into technical education by an independent panel, chaired by Lord Sainsbury.

Among the new routes are Construction; Transport and Logistics; as well as Legal, Finance and Accounting; however there is no clear route for entering the leisure industry. In

fact, the word 'leisure' did not feature once in Boles' 60-page Post-16 skills plan, despite the £117bn leisure sector accounting for 7.4 per cent of GDP, according to Deloitte.

When contacted by *Health Club Management*, a department for education spokesperson said that the government has included leisure industry jobs in the 15 Skills Plan routes, but across different pathways.

"As the routes have been developed to group skilled occupations with shared knowledge, skills and behaviour, leisure sector careers will be spread across different routes," said the spokesperson. "For example, jobs such as health and fitness trainers would be included within the Health and Science Route."

Details: http://lei.sr?a=gK5n4_H

'Far-reaching effects' of Brexit

Britain's impending withdrawal from the European Union will present a broad range of challenges for leisure training and qualifications, says one of the sector's leading education figures.

Active IQ managing director Jenny Patrickson believes Brexit will have far-reaching implications for further education and says that the active leisure sector must ensure it retains strong ties with European partners despite the outcome of the vote on 23 June. Bodies like EuropeActive will be vital in ensuring that the recognition and transferability of qualifications across borders will continue, believes Patrickson.

She added that maintaining the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) – a translation device which makes national

qualifications more readable across Europe – will be key to continuing the promotion of physical activity and its associated health benefits for individuals from all nations.

Amid warnings this week that Brexit could hit the UK's education sector by making it harder for international students to obtain visas, Patrickson said training providers and colleges may also find it harder to access central European funding.

"In other areas of further education, it is too soon to fully understand the longer term implications for the FE sector. However, many institutions rely on funding from the European Social Fund, with organisations currently bidding for those contracts," she told *Health Club Management*.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=m6y8t_H



Jenny Patrickson, Active IQ MD

People news



Jim Graham has been a key player

Changes at the top for The Gym Group

The Gym Group COO Jim Graham will leave by the end of this year and return to the world of private equity, the gym chain announced in a trading update issued last month.

Graham – who was operating partner at Phoenix Equity Partners before joining The Gym Group in April 2014 – is seeking fresh challenges, having helped the budget operator become the first UK gym chain to go public in more than a decade.

Treharne confirmed the gym chain will bolster its senior management team with two new appointments. Nick Henwood, previously at David Lloyd Leisure, will join as operations director in August, while Barney Harrison has been recruited from Sky and will take up the marketing director role in October 2016. Both will sit on the executive committee.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=G94gm_H



Nicola Blackwood, the new under secretary of state for public health and innovation

New DoH ministers in post

Three new ministers have been appointed to the Department of Health.

Former vice chair of the Conservative Party, Nicola Blackwood, has been named the parliamentary Under Secretary of State for public health and innovation. She will lead on all aspects of public health and health protection, as well as technology, innovation and data.

The new parliamentary Under Secretary of State for community health and care is David Mowat. In his first ministerial role since being elected as a member of parliament for Warrington South in 2010, Mowat will be responsible for adult social care, carers,

community services, cancer, dementia, learning disabilities and all elements of primary care.

Former assistant government whip Philip Dunne – who previously spent four years at the Ministry of Defence – joins the Department of Health as Minister of State for health. Dunne's brief includes overseeing all aspects of hospital care, NHS performance and operations, the workforce, patient safety and maternity care.

Jeremy Hunt kept his position as Secretary of State for health during Theresa May's first major reshuffle since becoming the UK's second female Prime Minister last month.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=B6T3r_H

Virgin names hotel guru as MD

Virgin Active has announced the appointment of hospitality expert Robert Cook as UK managing director.

Cook has led the development of a number of lifestyle hotel brands in the UK and Europe, having spent nine years as CEO of luxury brands Malmaison and Hotel Du Vin. Following his time at Malmaison, Cook held C-level roles at Macdonald Hotels and Resorts, as well

as De Vere Hotels Resorts and Village Urban Resorts.

Cook is expected to harness his deep

Cook has carved a career in hospitality

understanding of the luxury consumer market to aid Virgin Active's re-organisation of its 61-club portfolio, particularly as it looks to upgrade a number of its London clubs into its high-end Collection portfolio.

"This is a hugely exciting time in the evolution of the brand, which was a key influence in my decision to join Paul [Virgin Active CEO Paul Woolf] and the team," said Cook. "I firmly believe my many years leading some of the best known UK lifestyle brands will help me to add real value to the next step of Virgin Active's journey."

Woolf added that Cook's significant operational experience will help Virgin Active set a new benchmark for the UK.

"Robert joins at a very exciting time for the business as we accelerate our



Virgin Active: Re-organising its portfolio

strategy to focus on prime clubs in key metropolitan areas, organised around three core proposition pillars: Collection clubs, big family clubs and racquets clubs," Woolf said.

Details: http://lei.sr?a=gJ8ay_H



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EVENTS CALENDAR

AUGUST

25–26 | GoFest Surrey Sports Park, Guildford, UK

Now in its second year, GoFest is hailed as a family festival of sport, dance, health and fitness. The final event in the series is scheduled to take place on 3–4 September in Winchester, UK.
www.gofest.co.uk

SEPTEMBER

1–3 | Annual IHRSA / Fitness Brasil Latin American Conference & Trade Show São Paulo, Brazil

Offers education in a variety of interactive formats: traditional seminars, how-to sessions, and best practice sharing.
www.ihrsa.org/fitness-brasil

7 | National Fitness Day UK-wide

Fitness providers across the UK open their doors for free to the public.
www.nationalfitnessday.com

8–10 | FIBO China Shanghai, China

About 6,000 visitors attended FIBO China 2015, with 100+ brands showcased.
www.fibo-china.cn

20–21 | Leisure Industry Week NEC, Birmingham, UK

The UK's leading leisure industry event, with a fitness-orientated focus.
www.liw.co.uk

NEW EVENT

August–October 2016 Bear Grylls Survival Race

Bear Grylls' renowned spirit of endeavour, fitness and adventure lies at the heart of a series of four events across the UK this summer. The survival races include obstacles such as fire-lighting and air rifle shooting – skills which Grylls has mastered himself in the wild. Races will be over distances of 5k and 10k, as well as a race for children and a 30k route in London only. Charity places are available. The races will be held alongside an Outdoor Festival with food and activities such as bungee jumping, segway sessions, falconry and parajet flying shows.
www.beargryllssurvivalrace.com



21–23 | Interbike Expo Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas, Nevada, US

With hundreds of exhibitors on one floor, the annual Interbike International Bicycle Expo is where the bike industry gathers to celebrate, educate and conduct business.
www.interbike.com

17–20 | 16th Annual IHRSA European Congress Seville, Spain

Seminars are designed to help the 500+ visitors improve and grow their business, and there's also plenty of networking.
www.ihrsa.org/congress

OCTOBER

12–14 | Club Industry Show Hyatt Regency, Chicago, Illinois, US

A conference and trade show aimed at leading, connecting and inspiring the health and fitness community.
www.clubindustryshow.com

NOVEMBER

10 | ukactive Summit Emirates Stadium, London, UK

The largest political event in the activity sector's calendar, attracting senior influencers from physical activity, health, policy, brands, media, research, charity and local authority commissioning.
www.ukactive.com

16–19 | SIBEC Europe Ritz-Carlton Abama, Tenerife

The UK and Europe's major health and fitness operators join leading suppliers for a series of one-to-one meetings.
www.sibecu.com

29–30 | BASES Conference East Midland's Conference Centre, Nottingham, UK

The annual conference of the BASES, the professional body for sport and exercise sciences in the UK.
www.bases.org.uk

CHARITY EVENT

6–15 October 2016 Zambezi River Challenge

This exhilarating open-charity challenge sees participants whitewater-rafting for 10 days along one of Africa's toughest rivers. They'll paddle more than 100km, cross through six countries, take in sights such as Victoria Falls, hippos, crocodiles and elephants, and camp under the stars at night.
www.charitychallenge.com



Steve Gray

Nuffield Health wants to be the UK's leading health and wellbeing provider by 2020. Its CEO tells **Kate Cracknell** why the recent acquisition of 35 Virgin Active health clubs was a big step in the right direction

The thinking at Nuffield Health was already spot on when I first took up my role," says CEO Steve Gray. "It was just the doing that needed to be better."

Gray – who joined the charity in December 2015, from a background in consumer healthcare, to head up the entire hospital and fitness and wellbeing business – continues: "Fundamentally the organisation was in good shape. The direction of travel was right: the linking of preventative and curative healthcare, enabling people to take more proactive accountability for their own health and wellbeing, was the right strategy."

"The wellbeing side of the business – our fitness and wellbeing gyms – was also great. The team had done a fantastic job in building a consistent brand identity across the estate, which is difficult to do when you've grown through acquisition as we have."

"Our people are also fantastic, as is the way fitness is linked to other services to deliver total wellbeing. That side of our business has really dispelled a myth for me:

I now believe, if you get your offer right and you treat your customers and members right, fitness is actually a very big – and growing – market."

"However, across the Nuffield Health business as a whole, the implementation of the strategy wasn't quite there: we weren't connecting everything as quickly or effectively as we should have been. We had two divisions – wellbeing and hospitals – and we were in danger of them operating in isolation from each other."

"In addition, although we had some really motivated and engaged people working in our hospitals, we didn't have the same consistency in that division as we had in wellbeing. Yes, there's a need for local flexibility, because there are local customer needs, but there still needs to be more brand consistency across our hospitals. That's something we're working on."

"We've therefore changed the structure of the business following a full strategic review in the first quarter of this year, and we now have just one executive board overseeing both divisions of our business. We've pushed things together at the top level, because we need to live for ourselves what it is we want our customers to experience: fully connected healthcare."

"It will, of course, take time for that to flow through the whole organisation, but it was an important first step to make sure our strategic decision-making was connected and pitched from the perspective of total health and wellbeing."

A NATIONAL AMBITION

What, then, is the vision for Nuffield Health moving forward? "We want to be the UK's leading health and wellbeing provider by 2020," says Gray. "We want to be the trusted partner that empowers individuals to choose, maintain and recover to the level of health and wellbeing that they desire."

"In order to move from where we are now to that position, we need to make some strategic additions in terms of both scale and depth – and the recent Virgin Active deal [Nuffield Health acquired 35 Virgin Active health clubs in June] is part of that."

"We ultimately want a national footprint, and the 35 Virgin Active clubs take us much closer to achieving that ▶



Nuffield is now the second largest UK gym operator



We ultimately want a national footprint, with every Nuffield Health gym partnered with a Nuffield Health hospital

Steve Gray



- goal – we now have 112 fitness and wellbeing gyms, which makes us the second largest UK operator after Pure Gym.

"At the moment we still have some geographic gaps, but in the long run, every Nuffield Health gym will be partnered with a Nuffield Health hospital – connected not just geographically and operationally, but also through a seamless customer proposition. As a member of Nuffield Health, you'll have access to all the different services and products we offer, all of which will be available in your area. It will take us a little while to get there, but we think by 2020 we'll be in that position.

"In some areas of the UK we might need to build more hospitals, and we already have two new sites in the pipeline: one in Manchester and one in London, where we're the confirmed preferred bidder to build a private hospital on the Barts site.

"In other areas we may need more gyms. I don't have a precise number in terms of how many more we'll need – we know the right number is more than we have now, but we don't believe it's that much more – but we'll look at all options and opportunities and we believe we'll have reached the right number by 2020."

STRENGTH IN DEPTH

Gray continues: "In the meantime, we also need to increase the depth of our proposition by adding more service lines. There are areas of health and wellbeing where we don't do enough. We don't do enough nutritional support, for example, or emotional wellbeing. We certainly don't do enough online support. So there are some pieces missing in our jigsaw.

"A lot of people do fitness very well – we do fitness very well. But few people do emotional wellbeing or nutrition very well, and you really do need to bring all those three elements together to create a bespoke response for the individual. It might sound clichéd, but that sort of personalised, holistic approach is, I believe, the biggest opportunity in the health and fitness market at the moment. If you speak to me in a few months' time, I think we'll have some big news on that front.

"I also believe there are an awful lot of services that are currently offered in a hospital environment that would actually be much better, and more conveniently, offered in a wellbeing site – from dealing with minor ailments to diagnostics. Alongside this, I think people's acceptance of healthcare – who provides it, where and at what cost – is changing. People are becoming much more aware of the opportunities and the fact that you don't always have to go to the hospital.

"Again, the 35 Virgin Active clubs we've just acquired present a great opportunity here, because they're large sites with plenty of space to introduce more services."

CONNECTED CARE

The way Gray talks about his vision makes the linking of preventative and curative healthcare sound, if not easy, then at least achievable – so how might Nuffield Health be able to deliver this where so many other organisations, not least the NHS, have struggled?

"With our estate spanning hospitals and gyms, I believe we're uniquely placed to do this: we have competitors in hospitals, in gyms and in healthcare



Gray: Nuffield will be the UK's leading wellbeing provider



A lot of services currently offered in a hospital environment would actually be much better offered in a wellbeing site





PT clients benefit from diverse in-house expertise shared between staff

services, but we don't really have any single competitor in all three of those markets,' says Gray.

He continues: "There are two key prongs to our approach. The first marks an important shift in emphasis for us, namely that for a long time our strategy was about 'integrated care', whereas now we call it 'connected care'. We make all our services very visible and accessible, but it's down to the individual customer to make their own choices in terms of what they want to link together and how far along the care pathway they want to go with us.

"Digital will play a significant role in that, offering one single view of the customer – all their data from different interventions and programmes together in one place. This will be done for their benefit, so we can better serve them and connect their healthcare journey.

"The second prong is that our customer base gives us an advantage when it comes to investing in preventative healthcare. Most healthcare systems won't invest in prevention because it's too much of a leap of faith, but the majority of our customers are already very proactive about their health and wellbeing. We step in and support them in this; our charity status allows us to invest in the business wherever we think best to provide that support for our customers.

"Even in our hospitals, we have four times as many day case patients as we do in-patients; hospitals full of beds are a thing of the past. Our fastest growing customer group within our hospital environment is the direct self-paying consumer – they're in and out in a day and they take ownership of that. They're accountable for their health. We can then make sure that, once the operation is done, there's a complete follow-up – a bespoke plan that moves the individual into the proactive world of managing their own fitness and wellbeing within our clubs.

"We have so many well trained people – physiotherapists, physiologists, nutritional therapists, GPs, personal trainers – that our aim is for our facilities to be seen as centres for excellence, delivering total health and wellbeing for the individual and offering a wealth of knowledge that customers will benefit from, whoever their original point of contact at Nuffield Health."

With 2020 not far away and a busy agenda mapped out for those four years – national coverage, an even broader range of services, more creative thinking in terms of where services are delivered, and a more connected approach – the Nuffield Health story will certainly be one to watch. ●

Fitness is a large and growing market, says Gray



300% GROWTH

According to fitness industry consultant Bryan O'Rourke, the health and fitness industry is set for explosive growth over the next decade and could grow by 300 per cent. Wearable technology, smartphone apps and better use of data will all inspire the consumer to think about their wellbeing and lead to industry growth. Are these figures realistic and how can gym operators be part of the boom? **Kath Hudson** asks the experts

Bryan O'Rourke CEO, Fitness Industry Technology Council (FIT-C)

We believe the fitness market will reach one billion users by 2025.

We're currently undertaking research into the size and shape of the health and fitness market around the world – and that's no small task, because what we're measuring is constantly changing as technological developments

continue at pace. However, at this stage in the research we're fairly confident in saying there are currently 360 million digital fitness users around the world – whether devices, apps or both. We define users not just as people who've bought a device or downloaded an app, as many people stop after a few months, but who use the technology at least once a week to help them with their fitness.

Meanwhile, IHRSA estimates the global health club market to service 155 million members. We think that figure is a bit low: there are over 12,000 CrossFit locations globally alone, and then there are all the yoga studios and so on.

Of these club members, ACE research suggests one in five also uses digital fitness technology – although that percentage is likely to increase.

In terms of digital adoption, all population groups will see growth – it's just a case of when and how, which will depend above all on disposable household income. You can't assume adoption rates based on demographics any more: almost 40 per cent of wearables are owned by 35- to 54-year-olds. The early adopters might be younger, but this then matriculates through the population. And with a little over 2 billion smartphones now out there, of which 32 per cent have some sort of health and fitness app on them, the growth potential is huge.

When you look at this picture, it's clear it isn't just about gyms any more. It's about customers having their health and fitness needs served, with market growth driven by the evolution of fitness offerings to meet these needs. Digital is going to grow the market by helping people experience fitness in a different way.

As a result, traditional bricks and mortar will diminish as a percentage of delivery, although clubs will still have a role; Amazon and the online retailers still account for only around 12 per cent of total sales. The brands that do survive and thrive in the fitness sector will be the hybrids that integrate physical and digital delivery, and even more importantly that create a true customer experience – brands like Barry's Bootcamp and SoulCycle. Aesthetics and facility design will be more important than ever.

A combination of factors will lead to further growth. Fitness as lifestyle – as a status symbol – will be a key driver, while the arrival of AI (artificial intelligence) will broaden the appeal of fitness devices by morphing them into virtual coaches. Digital will also enable a variety of apps, wearables, hybrid models and medically integrated platforms to serve many more people more effectively, while 'private pay' integrated wellness will see huge growth. Mindfulness will also become a trillion dollar industry in the next few years.





PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Digital will create huge growth in the market, by helping people experience fitness in new ways

David Minton

Director, The Leisure Database Company (TLDC)

It's currently the most exciting time to be in the fitness industry in terms of innovation, growth and potential.

Three hundred per cent growth is definitely possible: the industry needs to think big. Globally we should be aiming for half a billion members.

Penetration rates are very low in the global fitness industry at present – still in the low single figures in lots of countries – so the potential is enormous, especially in Asia and the developing world. However, there's still huge potential for the market in the UK too, which has grown by two million members since 2007 to achieve 14.3 per cent population penetration.

Two factors will drive future growth: education and experience. Operators need to focus on improving both.

Following the lead of the hotel industry, they need to keep investing in the product and innovating.

They also need to get better at using data to connect with current and potential members. Although we're definitely seeing improvements, historically the industry has been poor at finding out how often members come, what they do and what they spend.

Change will happen across all ages and demographics. However, certainly in the UK I don't see a huge growth coming from the healthcare sector at the moment because, to engage with the NHS, the industry will need to become far more professional, start talking the same language and take part in clinical trials.



In our ageing society, older generations are looking at how they can stay healthy in later life

Steven Ward
Executive director, ukactive

With the mega trends impacting the industry, I think we're well on course for a 300 per cent growth globally in the next decade. Health and fitness has never been so centre of attention: we're seeing a boom in health-conscious consumers; some of the world's biggest brands like Google and Apple are embedding physical activity in their product development; and fashion and fitness are fusing like never before.

All demographics will contribute to this growth: there's a cast iron case for health and fitness from cradle to grave.

Today's children are growing up in an age where physical activity is an aspirational, normalised part of youth culture, while in an ageing society, more

and more people are looking at how they can stay healthy in later life.

In developing nations there's huge potential for growth, while in mature markets like the UK the growth will come through programmes, products and services to support the 13 million inactive people to become active.

In the future, we'll see a technology-enabled, personalised service that delivers enjoyment and progress whatever path the individual is on. Fitness businesses will have to inhabit many different environments – portable, physical and digital – to meet the needs of each individual.

Going forward, operators must carry on listening to the consumer, tailoring products and enhancing their services through technology. They mustn't stop their efforts to raise the bar in terms of the quality of either service or facilities.

Karsten Hollasch

Partner financial advisory (head of sport business Germany), Deloitte

I'm not able to comment on the 300 per cent growth, as I'm not sure how this calculation has been done, but I think EuropeActive's estimate of 80 million members by 2025 is definitely achievable. This figure represents a sound calculation based on history and future growth assumptions.

The industry has evolved and the offer has broadened, which has created more demand. Many people who have never trained, or who stopped training because they didn't get the results they were after, are now exercising.

The demographic pyramid is changing and I think the biggest growth will be from 60- to 75-year-olds. To adapt to this, operators need to create an

offering and atmosphere that makes older people feel comfortable, such as employing older staff and bringing in the right classes and equipment.

The market offering is also likely to become broader, with more specialised training options – EMS, functional training and so on – and tailored training for specific needs and user groups. The online market and other complementary offerings to the traditional club concepts will also fuel future growth.

What would really help grow the market would be more recognition from the healthcare sector about how being active could help prevent diseases and other medical problems.

In addition, if VAT for clubs were reduced or they received public funding to enable them to embrace a wider market, it could be a game-changer for the health and fitness industry. ●

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FREE YOUR MIND

Meditation and mindfulness – the ability to be fully connected in the present moment – is coming out of retreats, workshops and Buddhist centres and into everyday life. Is it time for gym operators to help members flex their mental muscles as well as their physical ones?

Kath Hudson reports

As the pace of life gets ever more frenetic, with everyone constantly plugged into technology, stress and its associated diseases are growing. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work reports that around 50 per cent of job absenteeism is caused by stress. Meanwhile, according to statistics from the Meridian Stress Management Consultancy, almost 180,000 people in the UK die every year from some form of stress-related illness.

Meditation and mindfulness are an effective way of breaking the stress cycle and fit naturally with health and fitness. Research from Rutgers shows that combining meditation with exercise (30 minutes each, twice a week) reduced the incidence of depressive symptoms by as much as 40 per cent in just two months. At the other end of the spectrum, meditation can also be used to enhance performance in many areas: athletically, at work and in relationships.

But however good the benefits, there are still a number of barriers to overcome: for many people, sitting calmly for 20 minutes without worrying about the to-do list or getting caught up in mental chatter is as inaccessible as a 5k run to someone who hasn't exercised in years.

We look at some initiatives that are aiming to make meditation and mindfulness more accessible and take them further into the mainstream...



Andy Puddicombe

EASY ACCESS MEDITATION APP

Created by charismatic former Buddhist monk Andy Puddicombe – who has been described as doing for meditation what Jamie Oliver has done for food – the Headspace app has been downloaded more than 7 million times in 190 countries. Featuring Puddicombe's voice along with playful animations and graphics, the library of meditations are based on teachings from the decade he spent in the monasteries of Asia.

It's a very accessible entry point to meditation. The first series is free and an easy introduction. Users then subscribe (£50 for the year) and can

access packs focused on different aims such as reducing anxiety or improving happiness. There are also on-the-go exercises to bring mindfulness to activities like walking, cooking and cycling, as well as three-minute SOS meditations for emergencies.

London 2012 canoeing legend Etienne Stott attributed his gold medal to Headspace. He was introduced to the app by the Team GB psychologist in 2011 and started meditating for 20 minutes each morning before training.

"The benefits come on two levels," says Stott. "In the short term it calms your mind, giving you more clarity and the space to think clearly when you're under pressure to

make decisions. In the long term, I've found it gives me the ability to keep perspective and choose my responses in challenging situations, rather than automatically going down the most obvious path."

All of this stood him in good stead at the London Olympics: "At that level, athletes need all of their resources: mental, physical, technical, even spiritual," he says. "When I sat on the start line at the Olympics, I felt very clear about what I wanted to do and very determined to do it, as well as dedicated to solving any problems which would crop up."



Etienne Stott (right)



HeadStrong features calming music and guided breathing

EQUINOX: MINDFUL WORKOUTS

Earlier this year, club operator Equinox created a mindful workout that will be offered in a number of key markets, including its Kensington club in London. The HeadStrong class targets stress by working body and mind in equal measure, and is delivered in four sections that mix cardio, strength training and regeneration.

The 'Focus' section starts with small movements like rolling over, gradually

building up to higher intensity exercises. 'Adapt' brings in equipment like ViPR.

'Willpower' brings in tougher challenges that rely partly on determination, such as planking. At the end of the class, 'Reboot' uses calming music, guided breathing and a relaxed mental focus.

Other senses are stimulated too. Music has been curated to stimulate the mind and complement the class format, while stimulating scents are used during the more active sections and calming aromas

— like eucalyptus towels and lavender oil — for the regeneration section.

"HeadStrong is a strategic thought-leader for us, but is somewhat niche," says Equinox West Coast PR manager Chelsea Haglar. "We're finding well-managed and promoted special event classes are the best way to keep this special programme and the topic alive. Kensington will be one of the markets offering a series of special event classes throughout the summer and autumn of 2016."

UNIVERSITY MEDITATION SPACE

Part contemplative space and part art gallery, Stanford University in the US opened a meditation centre in 2014. This serene space now provides a refuge from the daily intensity of life on campus and helps students deal with the mental stress of their studies.

The Windhover centre was inspired by artist and former Stanford lecturer Nathan Oliveira, who had envisioned a place where his Windhover painting series could be installed for people to sit, meditate and reflect. Open daily to students and faculty staff, some programming is being offered to introduce people to contemplative practices, such as guided meditation and yoga.

"Our hope for Windhover is that it will truly be a place of spiritual and personal refuge — a place for students and faculty staff to re-establish the much needed sense of balance and meaning that can lead not only to a deeper awareness of one's self, but also of the world and our place in it," says the Reverend Joanne Sanders, associate dean for religious life at Stanford University.



Windhover offers a 'spiritual and personal refuge'



Somadome incorporates LED colour therapy

MEDITATION POD

Somadome is a cocoon-like pod which aims to fast-track users into the mindfulness zone. Users benefit from guided meditation while being bathed in an LED colour therapy experience.

Brought to market last year, Somadome has already been adopted by the spa industry and makes its UK debut later this year at London's Etihad lounges. Some pilot projects in the fitness industry are also due to get underway soon, with fitness industry veteran Tony de Leede investing in the product and planning to put the pods into a number of his clubs in Australia.

"We think providing the space to connect the mind and body is critical in today's world," says spokesperson Kelly Gauthier. "We're living in complicated times and if we don't have access to the self, to silence the noise, we stand to have more stress."

Somadome has carried out a focus group with a high-end gym and the feedback was that it enhanced workout performance and improved mental focus at work. Meanwhile, a study of at-risk youths was carried out in conjunction with Dr Oz's HealthCorps: school attendance and performance went up, morale and moods improved, students felt less hopeless and there was a marked reduction in violent behaviour.

MINDFUL SPA THERAPIES

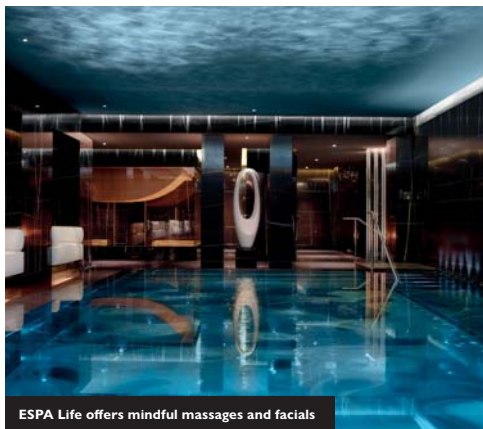
A luxury hotel spa in London – ESPA Life at Corinthia – has introduced a suite of mindfulness therapies aimed at helping its guests gain the maximum restorative effects mentally, emotionally and physically from their time at the spa.

Spa director Laura Vallati, who collaborated with ESPA to design the therapies, believes mindfulness is the key to wellness. She says: "I've studied mental and physical wellbeing for over 20 years, in many different cultures and parts of the world, and the one approach to life that seems to have profound effects on wellbeing at all ages is the practice of mindfulness."

Mindful Massage and Mindful Facial use breathing and visualisation techniques to complement the massage, to relax the mind and release physical or emotional anxieties.

Pranayama breathing and yoga nidra is introduced into the Mindful Breathing and Meditation treatment, where the goal is mastering conscious relaxation. A Mindful Sleep therapy is also offered, which incorporates a range of ingredients to lay the foundations for a good night's sleep: yoga nidra to soothe anxieties, hot stone and warm oil massage, and mindful breathing techniques.

Visualisation techniques and yoga nidra relaxation have also been introduced to fitness sessions run along the River Thames and in St James' Park. ●



ESPA Life offers mindful massages and facials



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According to ACSM's Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends 2016, the demand for trainers is ever-increasing. However, the relative high costs

of personal coaching are still prohibitive for a large amount of people. Technology can help! There are several ways to provide coaching models to this target group in a way that is both affordable and sustainable for your business.

THE COACHING PYRAMID

It's important to realise that coaching does not have to be an all-or-nothing deal. Between one-on-one personal training and complete self-management, there are various other gradations of coaching, each with a different target demographic. Applied to your current client base, you'd probably

“Experience shows that blended coaching models – coaching in combination with self-management using an app – boosts retention”

see it as a pyramid: the higher the level of personal attention, the higher the costs for both club and client, and the fewer people willing or able to afford the service.

SELF-MANAGEMENT

At the very bottom of the pyramid, there's the self-management approach. Present mobile app technology now allows you to give your clients access to default workout plans and tools for progress tracking through your gym app, completely automated at minimal extra costs. Software providers like Virtuagym even offer all-digital

upsell opportunities to this group. Personal guidance is minimal to zero, aside from perhaps an initial tour through the gym and its equipment.

COLLECTIVE COACHING

A step up from the self-management approach is collective coaching. The use of mobile apps and optional wearables now allow clubs to coach a large number of clients simultaneously. Trainers can distribute workouts, nutrition plans, recipes, motivational messages, challenges, and so on with a single click.

While collective coaching won't allow you to cater to every single need of your clients, it does allow you to provide a level of personal attention to many at minimal cost. Personal feedback can be offered in various tiers (think weekly, monthly or quarterly) allowing for affordable coaching for all and an interesting source of additional revenue. On top of that, experience shows that blended coaching models (coaching in combination with self-management using an app) also boost member retention.

WEARABLES

Already mentioned above, wearables are an easy way to diversify and increase your revenue. Your staff can advise your clients to purchase wearables which seamlessly integrate with your club and coaching

Technology can help bring coaching costs down by enabling different models



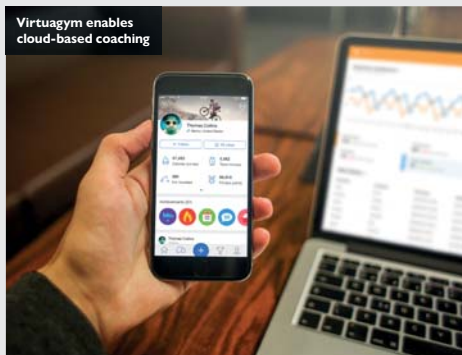


Tracked data can help coaches keep up to date with clients

EXPAND AND DIVERSIFY YOUR BUSINESS WITH VIRTUAGYM

Virtuagym is the all-in-one fitness software for health clubs and personal trainers. Cloud-based tools for client coaching and management enable you to effectively diversify and expand your business online. Deliver workout and nutrition plans directly to your clients via your own branded mobile app, wherever they are; motivate and engage them via your own online community via discussion groups, private messaging, and a challenge and reward system. Integrated business models based on upselling of PRO memberships offer the flexibility you need to offer various tiers of memberships. And deep integrations with the NEO Health smart monitors provide the tools for progress tracking at a distance, while simultaneously creating a new revenue stream through the NEO Health reselling programme.

Virtuagym enables cloud-based coaching



services. Moreover, tracked data can be made accessible to coaches. This way, wearables can be seen as the missing link between your club and your clients' daily lives. Wearables work great in combination with collective coaching – without in-person contact, coaches can still remain up-to-date on the progress of a large number of clients, and efficiently guide them where necessary.

EXPAND YOUR OFFERING

The advice to take away from all this would be not to choose between these various forms of coaching, but rather to expand your offering. A great example is personal training companies expanding their services with lifestyle coaching, combining a personal intake and follow-ups with self-management. The same can be done by health clubs, who often have thousands of existing clients who they can cater these services to.

By diversifying your offer as a gym, you can not only increase your retention and revenue from existing clients, but appeal to new demographics as well.

You can even use online coaching tools keep a line open with ex-clients. Even if they choose not to use your gym services in your club, you can still earn revenue and more easily draw them back in once they're ready to become your client again.

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BRANCHING OUT

In the first of a two-part series, **Stephen Tharrett** and **Mark Williamson**, co-founders of ClubIntel, report on the growing number of traditional club operators who are dipping a toe into the boutique studio market

Profit is the payment you get when you take advantage of change

This quote from Joseph Schumpeter speaks to the subject of this two-part series that explores traditional club operators who have ventured into the boutique fitness studio arena.

Our journey begins with a broad brushstroke introduction to the boutique fitness studio trend and the impact it's having on the health and fitness industry. We will then delve into the experiences of several leading club operators in the UK, US and Middle East, including many who have made the strategic decision to venture into the boutique business.

The journey will conclude – in part two of the series, in the September edition of *HCM* – with six takeaways for club operators who are considering whether to venture into this area of business.

THE STAGE HAS BEEN SET

Since the onset of the Great Recession of the 21st century, the health and fitness industry has found itself weathering a series of disruptive business innovations that have wreaked havoc in the sector.

The first storm was the arrival of the budget operators, with their low-price value proposition leaving an indelible mark on the industry. If that weren't enough, a second – equally destructive – storm then emerged: boutique fitness studios. The boutiques represented an entirely different innovative disruption – one that leveraged

a very different capitalistic principle.

Whereas budget clubs were an innovation that industry players could understand (all things being equal, the low price offering will win), boutique fitness studios were defying industry wisdom by saying you could get people to pay more for less.

According to IHRSA's upcoming 2016 *Health Club Consumer Report*, out this summer, 35 per cent of US fitness consumers report being "members" of boutique fitness studios, spending around US\$4bn more each year than members of traditional health and fitness facilities.

In the past few years, the number of consumers calling boutique fitness studios their destination of choice has grown by around 70 per cent, while traditional fitness facility membership has grown by a picaune 5 per cent. These boutique fitness "members" are, on average, a decade younger than your traditional club member, and primarily millennials.

These numbers tell a story – one that speaks to a sea change in how fitness consumers, and particularly millennials, spend their discretionary and non-discretionary income on enriching their personal health and fitness.

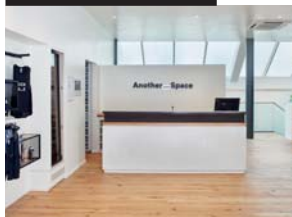
And now a small cadre of traditional but forward-thinking operators are seizing the business opportunity inherent in this newest capitalistic storm, endeavouring to profit from boutique fitness, whether by strengthening their existing value proposition or by creating a new one.

MAINSTREAM GOES NICHE

Perhaps the first mainstream club operator to identify the boutique studio opportunity was Equinox, which in 2008 acquired Pure Yoga's two studios in New York, and three years later acquired New York's hottest boutique studio business, SoulCycle. SoulCycle now has over 80 sites, with the UK on the radar – plans are to launch in London by the end of 2016.

But Equinox isn't the only club operator to have ventured into the boutique studio arena. As of June 2016, a number of established UK commercial operators – David Lloyd Leisure, Fitness First, Pure Gym and The Third Space – have also thrown their hats into the boutique ring. Not to be outdone, a handful of local authority operations are also introducing boutique studio concepts, such as the Intensity studio run by Fusion Lifestyle.

The entry of more established operators into the boutique fitness sector could prove a blow to traditional operators who choose not to adapt



Another_Space attracts young, affluent urban consumers willing to pay a premium for the experience

Meanwhile, in the US, respected operators including Atlantic Coast Athletic Clubs (Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia), Brick Bodies (Maryland), Leisure Sports (California), Miramont Lifestyle Fitness (Colorado) and Town Sports International (Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Washington, DC) have plunged into the boutique studio fray.

Similar to the UK market, there are also local government recreation departments in the US looking to supplement their existing offerings with a boutique component.

The entry of these big, mainstream players into the boutique segment could be compared to the initial aftershocks after an earthquake. Similar to the supplemental damage caused by aftershocks, the entry of more established operators into the boutique fitness sector could prove another blow to traditional operators who choose not to adapt, and a first strike against independent studio owners who don't evolve their business.

To better understand why these traditional operators have entered the boutique studio market, and to comprehend the strategic and operational implications of their brand divergence, we sat down with several operators – based in the UK, US and Middle East – to explore the why, what and how of their decision, and its consequences. What follows are highlights from the UK and Middle East interviews, with the US interviews to come in part two.

THIRD SPACE LAUNCHES

ANOTHER_SPACE

Interview with CEO Colin Waggett



The Third Space operates four premium clubs in central London that are defined by high-end finishes, comprehensive programmes and

facilities and an edgy but luxurious feel. In May of this year, it also introduced Another_Space, which delivers a boutique experience built around cycling, HIIT and yoga. The studio is a standalone offering, charging £30 more for 10 classes than a monthly membership costs at one of its Third Space clubs.

What drove your decision to open a boutique fitness studio?

We had observed the emergence of a newly affluent audience – young, urban professionals seeking stylish and novel experiences that aligned with their lifestyles. We saw fitness consumers seeking out inspirational, high-touch and tribal experiences – embodied by the

boutiques – as well as continuing to use mainstream gyms and health clubs.

We chose to focus on cycling, HIIT and yoga as the three most popular activities sought by this target audience, as well as being entirely complementary disciplines from a training perspective.

What were some of the critical decisions you made once you decided to enter the boutique space?

The first decision was to separate the management of the two businesses. The genome of the two operations is entirely different, and as a result we wanted a team that was dedicated to Another_Space, not unduly influenced by the cultural DNA of The Third Space.

Second was to brand the studio separately from the clubs; if the studio had been branded as Third Space, it would have confused consumers and made it difficult to set the two offerings apart. Branding the studio as Another_Space allowed us to differentiate the experience and create a unique, relevant identity for the brand. However, incorporating 'Space' into the name offered enhanced credibility through association with Third Space. ▶

Without great social media dialogue and strong word-of-mouth driving client traffic, success can be fleeting

Colin Waggett



Pure Ride capitalises on the huge boom in boutique cycling

► **What are the key differences between operating a premium club and a boutique?**

At the fitness studio, you live and die by the quality of your instructors and your classes. In the boutique fitness studio arena, classes and instructors have to be really extraordinary. The class proposition has to be delivered at a considerably higher plane than in the traditional club setting.

The social and community aspect is considerably more important in a boutique studio than in a traditional club too. Studios require a more disciplined focus on fostering social engagement and community-building among clients (ie creating 'tribes').

There's no sales team at the studio, so generating a strong client base is entirely dependent on the quality of your programmes, the social atmosphere of the studio, and the strength of community that's being fostered.

Social media and word-of-mouth lie at the heart of the marketing. Without a great social media dialogue and strong word-of-mouth driving client traffic, success can be fleeting.

However, the financial metrics for a studio and a traditional club are not wildly different when accounting for the space occupied by the respective facilities.

The emotional connection between instructors and clients is significantly more important in the studio environment than in the gym setting

Francine Davis

PURE GYM'S 'PURE RIDE' Interview with Francine Davis, strategic and commercial director



Pure Gym is the UK's largest health club operator, having recently purchased the estate of former UK operator LA fitness. The low-cost operator already offered up to 80 free classes a week in each club, but in January 2016 the company took one step further, launching a standalone boutique fitness brand called Pure Ride.

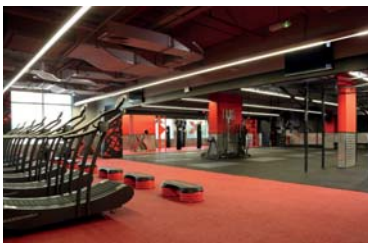
The studio offers 60 premium cycling classes each week across two studios. Classes last for 45 minutes, including rides developed in consultation with British Olympic cycling champion Sir Chris Hoy, and are offered individually or in packages of up to 10 rides.

What drove your decision to open a boutique fitness studio?

Pure Gym entered the boutique sector for two reasons. The first was strategic in nature: we had observed that fitness consumers, many of them already our members, were seeking out a more accessible, specialised, immersive, pay-as-you-go fitness experience.

The second reason focused on leveraging current consumer trends. We realised that, as the market changed – and the preferences of our core consumers with it – we needed to deliver a fitness proposition that leveraged those changes while remaining true to Pure Gym's overarching mission: to make fitness accessible to as many people as possible.

We focused on cycling – rather than, say, barre, HIIT or yoga – due to our wealth of experience in this area. With Sir Chris Hoy as advisor to Pure Gym, and sites nationwide running classes, we had



XFit is Fitness First Middle East's new functional training-style boutique (FIT studio offering

garnered an incredible wealth of talent and experience with cycling, and it made sense to leverage that expertise with the first Pure Ride studio.

What are the key differences between operating a chain of low-cost clubs and operating a boutique?

The community element in boutique fitness is very strong – more so than in traditional clubs – and is something that needs to be cultivated, as it's very important to the success of the studio. Social media has played an essential role in building a strong sense of community among our Pure Ride clients, with word-of-mouth also key to success.

The emotional connection between the instructors and clients is also significantly more important in the studio environment than in the gym setting. Clients want to go on a mental and physical journey – one that makes them feel on top of the world.

XFIT FOR FITNESS FIRST MIDDLE EAST

Interview with George Flooks, COO



Fitness First Middle East, owned by the Landmark Group and operating independently from the rest of the global chain, recently introduced

a functional training boutique studio concept to complement its more traditional health club offerings.

What drove Fitness First Middle East to pursue a boutique studio model?

The market in the Middle East is rapidly evolving, and we wanted to explore new models away from our traditional club concept. The decision to pursue a boutique model was strategic and driven in part by the desire to demonstrate that

Fitness First could diversify its product offering and introduce new business models that leveraged the changing interests of the global marketplace.

Our market data showed there was specifically a demand among Middle Eastern consumers for a functional training-style boutique fitness studio.

Can you tell us more about XFit?

XFit is a three-in-one concept: one studio that's been separated into three separate zones (LIFT Zone, BOX Zone and HIIT Zone), divided by sliding partitions.

The studio can be completely open to showcase all three zones, or can be separated into three separate spaces to allow three classes to run simultaneously.

The classes are for individuals who want dynamic 30- to 45-minute classes led by 'rock star' instructors. Although the studio is a standalone facility with its own brand identity – an edgy, gritty feel that speaks to the intensity of functional-based training – it will have an implied link to Fitness First to leverage the reputation of the Fitness First brand in the Middle East.

Has XFit performed to the company's expectations so far?

The studio has only been open for three months, but the market's response has exceeded our expectations. We're

You don't cannibalise your existing membership base. Existing members use the studio for an entirely different reason than they do their home club

George Flooks



The Gym Group currently has no plans to create a boutique concept

► confident that, after its first year of operation, the studio will exceed its financial projections.

What are the key learnings from operating both a traditional health club chain and a boutique?

The studio is a faster-paced and more seamless environment. It offers members greater flexibility, easy entry, easy exit and fast-paced workouts.

It's also far more energy-efficient than a traditional health club. In our case, the studio runs on 35 kilowatts of power.

You don't cannibalise your existing membership base. Existing members use the studio for an entirely different reason than they do their home club.

The use of smart technology is a game changer and critical to the overall experience. It enhances efficiency and at the same time brings a cool look and feel to the experience.

ALL THAT GLITTERS...

However, not all traditional operators are interested in venturing down the boutique path: John Treharne, founder and CEO of UK budget operator The Gym Group, has said his company currently has no desire to enter this segment of the market – we ask him why in a moment.

Other operators, such as Fitness First, have tested boutique concepts but ultimately not progressed them.

Fitness First had already been testing a number of different models around the world, including The Zone in Sydney, Australia – a group exercise-based club offering around 100 classes a week across six distinct zones. Then, in January 2014, the UK operation opened a 435sq m standalone studio called BEAT in central

London: a high intensity, heart rate training-based boutique. But in 2016 it closed this "concept test" studio, instead incorporating BEAT programming into the studio timetable at a couple of its existing Fitness First clubs in London. These BEAT classes now average approximately 26 to 27 members per class, with three to four classes offered daily.

GYM GROUP: NO BOUTIQUE PLANS

Interview with John Treharne, founder and CEO

.....



Why is the Gym Group not pursuing the boutique studio opportunity?

The primary reason is to maintain the purity and clarity of the Gym

Group brand. If we were to branch into the boutique segment, it would create confusion regarding the brand, and our investors – along with the market in general

– have placed considerable value on the equity that has been built in the brand.

While we do of course explore trends, the real key for us is to leverage sustainable innovation that builds on the brand's current equities and doesn't dilute what we do best: operating the best budget gyms in the market.

What advice would you share with other health club operators who aren't sure whether to explore the boutique route?

First, be crystal clear about who you are and what you're doing. Don't dilute your existing brand promise for the sake of pursuing a trend that has the potential to diminish the equity that you've already built in your brand.

Second, do your homework and understand if what you're considering is a fad or a trend. A lesson I learned early on in my career was: 'Be in love with the business, not the game.' Chasing fads and untested trends is a sign that you're loving the game, not the business. ●

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Stephen Tharrett (left) is a 35-year veteran of the fitness industry, having served in multiple leadership roles, including CEO of the Russian Fitness Group, SVP for ClubCorp and president of IHRSA.

Mark Williamson (right) has over 25 years' experience in market research, working for some of the largest hospitality brands in the world.

Stephen and Mark are the co-founders of ClubIntel (www.club-intel.com), a brand insights firm based in the US. Stephen can be reached at stevet@club-intel.com



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AN EYE FOR DESIGN

In the latest part of our architecture and design series, we showcase four more clubs from around the world that put the spotlight firmly on design

A NEW SPACE

ANOTHER_SPACE, LONDON, UK

Uppmarket London gym chain Third Space has opened its first boutique studio, branded Another_Space, targeted at "fitness-savvy, fashion-conscious Londoners".

The studio, designed by Goldstein Ween, is a 7,582sq ft (704sq m) site in London's Covent Garden, offering a range of class-based fitness programmes.

The studio is split over two floors and features specialist training rooms for power yoga, cycle and HIIT. The pay-as-you-go concept costs £20 per class, with a

small discount for bulk purchases. "Another_Space was designed to create a feeling in our customers that this is their time, away from everyday stresses – a place where they can feel refreshed and energised," says Suzanne Waggett, head of interior design at Another_Space.

"The design maximises natural light throughout the reception areas and Yoga_Space. We've used simple, clean lines and high quality, natural materials. Choices of furniture, lighting and finishes are more akin to those you would find in a boutique hotel than a gym.

"The aim was to create a space where customers want to be, rather than a place feel they should be – where everything about it makes them want to come back."

Another_Space features boutique-style furnishings to appeal to fashion-conscious Londoners





The gym is housed in a former post office

OLD MEETS NEW

TRAINMORE AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

With interior design by Amsterdam-based Vens architects, Trainmore Amsterdam sets out to create a retail feel within a fitness environment.

As with the other clubs in the Trainmore chain, Trainmore Amsterdam is located in a historic building in the centre of the city – in this case the old post office, located on one of the city's canals. With an urban, young feel to the club, each room aims to offer members a different experience. For example, the changing rooms are located in the old vaults.

While offering huge potential to be creative – with modern materials such as steel, wood and glass used to complement the older architecture – this approach to site selection also throws up challenges, as the locations tend to spread across several floors and haven't originally been designed with health and fitness in mind.



Modern materials complement the old architecture



The changing rooms are in the old vaults

FLUID THINKING

MOKSHA, PANCHKULA (HARYANA), INDIA

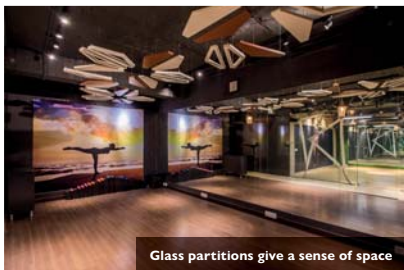
The architects responsible for creating Moksha had a challenge on their hands: how to create everything the client wanted, including a spa and cycling studio, in available 2,000sqft space of the basement beneath the existing gym facility.

Moksha was therefore kept simple and linear, with the different areas flowing into each other. Glass partitions for the studios add an element of transparency, providing glimpses of the activities inside, yet separating them from each other. On top of this, however, a sense of depth is achieved via the use of overlapping metal frames.

Further interest has been added to the design by hanging old, used bicycles from the ceiling in the passageway, and using treated wooden branches for the ceiling design in the reception area. To break the monotony of subdued interiors, large colourful murals and posters are used on studio walls. Flooring has been kept darker in contrast with the walls and ceiling, balancing the visuals.



Wooden branches form part of the ceiling



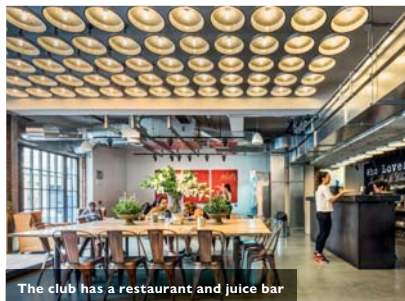
Glass partitions give a sense of space



Old bicycles hang from the ceiling



Sliding screens can change studio spaces



The club has a restaurant and juice bar



Lights change colour for different classes

SLIDING DOORS

CORE COLLECTIVE, LONDON, UK

Architecture studio Waind Gohil + Potter Architects (WG+P) have transformed the ground floor and basement of an abandoned mansion block to create a bespoke gym in London.

The gym, operated by boutique operator Core Collective, features exposed concrete and masonry, ambient and interactive lighting, refined acoustics and several social spaces. WG+P have also added a café, shop, restaurant, juice bar and public art programme "to provide a truly unique space for wellbeing in the city".

The studios in the gym use sliding screens to adapt to different uses, including instructor-led sessions like TRX, HIIT, power yoga and group cycling. Other features include colour-changing LED lighting, which creates "low, warm and energised space" for group cycling and "expanded, cool and focused space" for yoga. The sound system interacts with the lighting to vary intensity during a workout. ●



The design in the bathrooms is urban in feel

Craig Lister

Green Gym harnesses the power of nature and physical activity to engage deconditioned and vulnerable people. MD Craig Lister tells **Jak Phillips** about the initiative's ambitious five-year plan

Delivering physical activity with a purpose. That's the objective of conservation initiative Green Gym, which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of its participants – typically harder to reach demographics who may be experiencing joblessness, ill health due to their lifestyle, or have mental health conditions – by boosting their activity levels, reducing isolation and supporting better mental wellbeing.

Co-founded in 1998 by activity expert Dr William Bird (see also p10) with The Conservation Volunteers, Green Gym has steadily grown to reach 140 sites across the UK and last year won £475,000 in growth funding from Nesta and the Cabinet Office.

Having recently scooped a prestigious Health and Wellbeing Award from the Royal Society for Public Health, Green Gym organisers want to harness this momentum to reach 600 locations in the next five

years, working with local authorities, GPs, leisure operators, schools and employers.

Green Gyms are a weekly activity, running for three to four hours at a community facility such as a park. Each Green Gym has up to 50 or 60 volunteers (the organisation's name for participants), with turnout on any one week typically ranging from six to 20. Sessions include a specialised warm-up and cool-down, plus a wide range of gardening and land management activities. Intensity increases over time according to ability; volunteers may begin with light tasks like potting seedlings, later moving on to shifting gravel or digging.

We speak to Green Gym MD Craig Lister – a physiologist who has held senior roles in both the fitness and public health sectors with the likes of Public Health England and the NHS – about why a more rounded approach to wellness could be the key to successful long-term behaviour change.



What should we be doing to bring fitness and public health closer together?

My underpinning belief around public health is that we've moved too far down the evolutionary process. We evolved with physical activity being obligatory – for example, if you wanted to eat chicken, you would have to go and catch a chicken, which isn't an easy task. Then you had to pluck the chicken, cook it, and only then did you get some calories. Now you can simply go to a fried chicken shop and get three times the calories with no calorie expenditure. We've moved from being frequently active to passive.

How can we reverse this and bring physical activity to the fore?

In the NHS, we remain very prescriptive and tend to give tablets for symptoms such as high blood pressure. But actually, in most cases, high blood pressure, poor blood cholesterol and obesity are all symptoms of lifestyle choice. You can medicate against some or all of those, but if the lifestyle choice

doesn't change, then the symptoms can become life-threatening cancers and conditions.

However, GPs don't really have time to have those discussions with their patients. Meanwhile, Level 4 qualifications in the fitness industry are ensuring there are some very well qualified people in the sector now, so it's in a good position to help.

Public health is all about managing the cause. People drinking fresh water was a very early example of public health, which reduced a whole range of conditions. Rather than treat people for the conditions associated

with drinking dirty water, you make an effective intervention to tackle the cause. It's the same with lifestyle conditions.

How has this shaped the guiding principles of Green Gym?

The Green Gym founder and practising GP Dr William Bird recognised these evolutionary and treatment issues. He realised the gym wouldn't appeal to people with obesity issues ▶



Green Gym volunteers see the fruits of their labours



INSECT
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GREEN
GYM

“We want a Green Gym in reasonable travelling distance of everyone in the country. We'd like to become the UK's biggest gym chain, and it won't cost anything to join”

Craig Lister

- and chronic back pain – you have to have a level of confidence to go to a gym, particularly these days – so he set out to create an alternative solution.

That alternative consisted of directing people to other activities that are much closer to what we've always done as the human species – gardening-type activities in parks and green spaces, which we call physical activity with a purpose. Rather than running on a moving belt or cycling on a bike that doesn't go anywhere, you do some physical activity and achieve a tangible outcome.

What does a Green Gym session look like?

We get people together for three to four hours once a week. Participants will do a structured warm-up, like you might see in a gym but pertinent to the activities that are about to take place.

For the activities, we use only manual tools – no power tools – which is considerably harder work than

moderate mental health challenges, people who are lonely and isolated, people who might have not had a job for a long time or with mild learning difficulties. A key thing for us is creating a non-judgemental environment.

You don't wear a uniform and don't have to buy gym kit or trainers, which for a lot of people are prohibitively expensive. You wear whatever you want to wear. But also you're in the middle of a park, so you can walk away at any point if you want to – there's no threat, no enclosed space where you might feel trapped.

But more than anything else, that space which wasn't being used by the community because it was overgrown or full of litter is now a pleasant place for the whole community to enjoy.

What does it take to set up a Green Gym?

We pull people together into a green space through posters and social media advertising. Each Green Gym is

Local authorities can pool money away from budgets such as public health, parks, adult social care, children's care and infrastructure, because we impact on all of those things

you might expect. Try digging for 20 minutes, or hoeing, and you'll appreciate the workout this gives. People work for about an hour and then we have a tea break and talk about stuff – that's a very important part of the session.

We then go back to work, but people can now increase or decrease their workload depending on how they feel. Then we do a structured cool-down and people go on their way.

What are the benefits compared to a more conventional workout?

At the end of an activity – maybe it's digging a new path or planting – participants step back and something's changed. There are trees planted where there weren't trees before. There's now a path where once there were weeds and litter. You get immediate visual feedback. Not only that, but you've done it with a group of people you didn't know before. You start to get a serotonin response, a dopamine response – feelings of satisfaction and achievement.

How important is the social aspect of a Green Gym?

It's all about social cohesion. We create strong, resilient communities where before these didn't exist.

We seem to disproportionately attract people with mild to



led by a trained officer, who will typically be experienced in managing green spaces, with horticultural and environmental qualifications.

Typically somebody – a local authority, for example, or public health or private organisation – would commission a Green Gym for two years and we then run it once a week for two years; we focus on environmental work around an annual cycle, so two years is two annual cycles. We upskill the volunteers during that time so, by the third year, we tend to step away and the

volunteers set themselves up as a non-constituted group. They take on a licence from Green Gym, which costs £2,000 a year. For this we offer training, data collection and reporting. In some places, we have Green Gyms that have run themselves for more than 10 years.

How are the gyms funded?

Green Gyms are free for the user: whoever commissions us pays us, so to the user it's free.

In terms of the cost of a Green Gym, the standard model costs £30,000 a year for two years. Each Green Gym has a leader who we employ; they create a management programme for the land, because they're not just planting trees and managing ponds but also ensuring biodiversity, enabling more animals, insects, birds and frogs to thrive.



Only manual tools are used, so it's hard work



Each Green Gym caters for 50–60 volunteers, with typically between six and 20 people attending each week

That runs for two years and during that time we gather data, we train lots of people, we put quality standards in place. We also procure all the tools, which is quite an expensive process to get the quantity we need.

How can leisure and fitness operators collaborate with Green Gyms?

Leisure centres are excellent facilities and we're eager to increase our collaboration in this area, particularly around exercise referral. Leisure centres are at the heart of communities, with parking around them, so we're very much looking to develop that.

We're looking to work with Sport England to introduce a certain number of our people into sport – not everyone, but a certain group. We also believe that using fitness instructors to measure the fitness of our volunteers would be much more effective than using our own volunteer leaders – firstly because the fitness instructors are qualified to do that, but secondly it doesn't damage the relationship between our volunteer leaders and our volunteers, which becomes quite a trusting relationship.

Are you working with any operators on exercise referral schemes at the moment?

We're working in Camden and Islington, and we're going to start working with Aquaterra to have Green Gyms as part of the exercise referral scheme there. The exercise referral options will be to go to the gym, go on a walking programme, or go to a Green Gym.

We also have three Green Gyms at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham – actually on the hospital site – so people come straight out of some of the mental health and musculoskeletal programmes into the Green Gym. We're also talking to some CCGs now, and in fact yesterday we were talking to a GP federation group.

Green Gym is all about lifestyle change and what we find is, after a while, people actually start doing a bit more gardening in their own homes and they tell other people about that, which helps to pull more people in.

Evidence is key to exercise referrals. How do you go about tracking the fitness progress of Green Gym volunteers?

We have two specialist researchers – Joy and Natasha. Joy is a quantitative specialist and Natasha is a qualitative specialist. As we scale up, we're looking to gather more evidence. We already have good evidence in terms of the mental health benefits, but the challenge we have is measuring changes in physical activity in real time – not self-reported, but direct measurement – because obviously we're in the middle of a field or a park, and the people who run the Green Gyms aren't exercise professionals or physiologists. We're therefore talking to fitness suppliers about gathering data in the field through wearable tech, for example.

We're also potentially going to be working with some GP practices, which will take measurements like blood pressure, blood cholesterol and blood glucose before and after we deliver a Green Gym cycle.

We'll need a reasonably large sample size to be able to say the Green Gym is the cause of any positive change, but there's a lot of interest in this because the cost of delivering Green Gym sessions is considerably lower than the cost of having people on drugs.

What are your long-term ambitions?

At the moment we have about 140 Green Gyms in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

My four colleagues and I are funded by Nesta and the Cabinet Office, because the social return on investment in Green Gym has been assessed by the New Economics Foundation to be £4.02 to every £1.00 invested. Nesta has recognised this and wants us to scale up Green Gyms, so my job as MD is to guide us past 500 Green Gyms in the next two to four years, by working with other groups such as CCGs, hospital trusts, local authorities and leisure operators.

Our long-term goal is to have a Green Gym within reasonable travelling distance of everyone in the country. Effectively we'd like to become the biggest gym chain in the UK – and it wouldn't cost people anything to join. ●



A NEW SPIN ON THINGS

A boutique club within a club is an exciting new trend that offers fresh opportunities for all parties. Might it be worth considering for your full-service facility – and if so, which model might suit your business? **Kath Hudson** reports

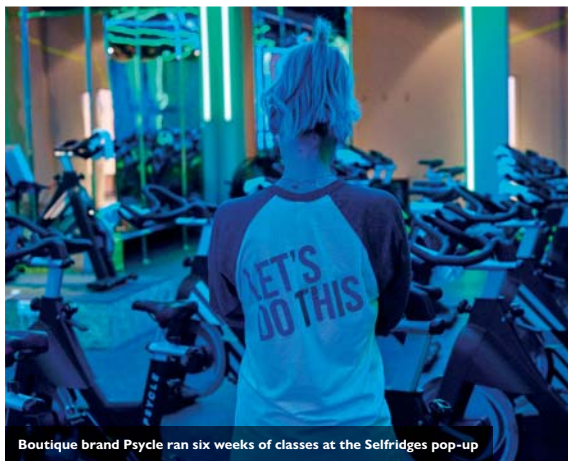
The appetite for boutique fitness studios is significant and growing. "Last year, twice as many exercisers opted for a boutique gym experience as in 2014, and in the US, more than 40 per cent of the 54 million members of health and fitness facilities now use fitness boutiques," says Les Mills CEO Phillip Mills.

Following in the wake of celeb favourite SoulCycle – the US-based chain of indoor cycling studios that has built a passionate tribe around its offering – indoor cycling is the boutique concept to have gained the most traction. And now the model is starting to evolve, with boutique cycling studios popping up as standalone clubs within other facilities. "Boutique offerings aren't limited to standalone studios. In fact, the addition of boutique solutions within traditional multi-purpose facilities could be the key to long-term success," adds Mills.

SHOP-IN-SHOP

The retail industry has already honed the concept of a shop within a shop, Mills adds, and the health and fitness industry could follow this lead: "During the 1980s, boutique fashion stores began to pop up and the popularity of department stores began to plummet. As a result, in recent years, many department stores have driven a renaissance by integrating in-store boutique offerings."

Where before these in-store boutiques might have been different fashion labels



Boutique brand Psycle ran six weeks of classes at the Selfridges pop-up

or different brands of cosmetics, now a crossover between retail and health and fitness is appearing. Paris department store Galerie Lafayette has been offering in-store yoga and pilates classes to complement the launch of its expanded

range of sports and wellbeing clothing. Going one step further, to illustrate its commitment to wellness, London's upmarket department store Selfridges created an in-store pop-up studio – as part of its Body Studio initiative – which



Cyc Fitness works with a number of health club operators in the US to offer a club-in-club concept

was open for three months, from April to July 2016. London cycling studio Psycle ran a pop-up cycling experience in the studio for six weeks, before handing over to yoga operator Yung Club.

"As a young British business, we were excited to partner with such a legendary brand as Selfridges," says Psycle CEO Rhian Stephenson. "A lot of the Selfridges team come to Psycle and are part of our community, so with the launch of the store's new Body Studio and a focus on wellness, it was a natural fit for the two brands to partner up."

CLUB-IN-CLUB

Another way this trend is playing out is through health and fitness operators teaming up – specifically, full-service clubs making space in-house for third party boutique operators to come in and run

their own self-contained fitness studios, under their own brands.

For the boutique operator, this offers low-risk growth opportunities and a captive market of gym members to convert to its offering.

Meanwhile the full-service host club benefits from the boutique's cool image and personal touch, all of which has high consumer appeal – new fitness enthusiasts are drawn to the club by the boutique. It will typically also receive a percentage of the boutique's revenue, as well as discounts on boutique passes for its members – and will also be freed up to focus on the gym while the studio no longer loses members to local boutiques, but instead thrives.

US operator Town Sports International has announced two such partnerships – with indoor cycling operator Cyc Fitness and athletic-based training studio Tone



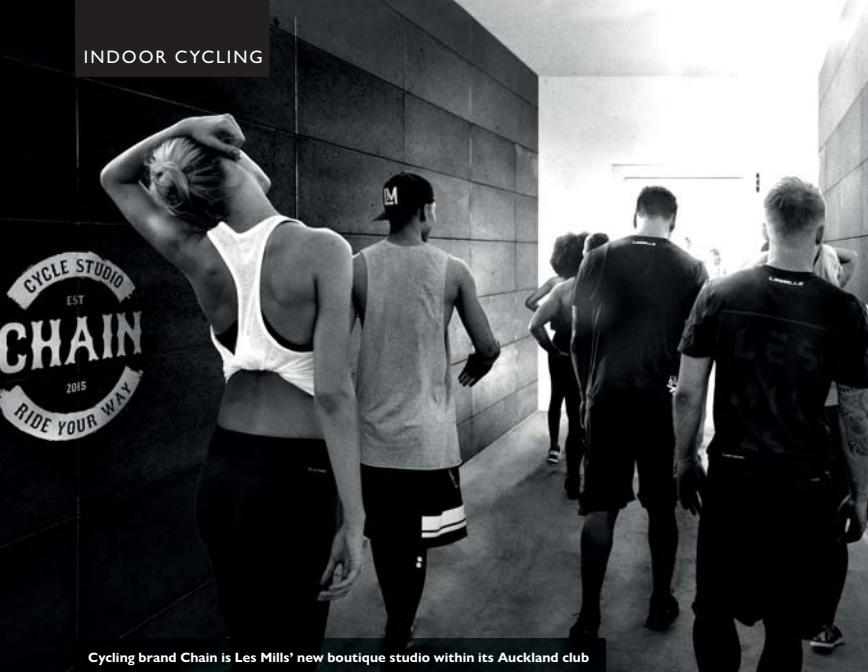
Cyc operates studios inside David Barton Gyms in the US

House – to offer club-in-club concepts inside selected gym and BFX locations, to form a "curated studio collective". Cyc and Tone House will run their classes and operate independently of TSI.

"We're maximising our unique real estate position to provide a world-class experience, by partnering with best-in-class studio experiences," says TSI spokesperson Lisa Hufcut. "The goal of these partnerships is to elevate the New York Sports Club brand, while offering an unrivalled experience to our consumers in ▶

The addition of boutique solutions within traditional multi-purpose facilities could be the key to long-term success

Phillip Mills



Cycling brand Chain is Les Mills' new boutique studio within its Auckland club

- ▶ which they can take an elite cycling class one day, an amazing cross-training class the next day and then a third dynamic class the following day."

The first TSI club to feature both a Cyc Fitness and a Tone House studio is Boutique Fitness Experience (BFX) in New York's Chelsea district, which opened this summer. A second studio collective is now slated for Manhattan's Upper East Side.

"The fitness landscape has changed dramatically in the last few years. Expanding partnerships with premium studios allows us to embrace the specialised fitness programmes our customers enjoy, while allowing boutique owners to supercharge their growth and significantly reduce risk at the same time," says the CEO of TSI, Patrick Walsh.

Cyc has already partnered with other brands to create a similar club-in-club offering, including inside DavidBartonGyms in New York and Boston, and at the Forum Athletic Club in Atlanta.

GOING IT ALONE

A third example of how this trend is playing out is for the club-in-club to be run by the same operator as the main club, but branded separately and operating in

"Partnerships with studios allow us to embrace the specialised programmes our members enjoy, while allowing the boutiques to supercharge their growth"

Patrick Walsh, TSI

its own right. Les Mills' club in Newmarket, Auckland, New Zealand – which opened last November – is an example of this, with its cycling studio Chain.

Chain offers a mix of live and virtual classes and has 3,280 monthly attendances (1,739 live, 1,541 virtual). The concept was created to protect Les Mills clubs from boutique cycle studio competition, says Mills: "Our aim was to create our own boutique within our club which was better than any of the external cycling boutiques."

He continues: "The keys to this were the variety of programmes – boutiques often have just one concept, which limits market size and can go out of fashion. We offer our immersive screen, which we use not only for immersive class The Trip but also for larger-than-life virtual classes."

The studio was also given a distinct brand to make its status as a boutique absolutely clear, as well as to specifically attract the Millennial market. The plan has worked, as within seven months the club was operating almost at capacity, including a huge number of Millennial members.

Although Chain operates as a separate club, it's run centrally. "This allows us to decide on a price that optimises the balance between income from booking fees and new members," says Mills.

And he predicts we will see more of this going forward: "When it's done properly, it's a great addition to the business, just like running a great personal training operation. It attracts members and also earns secondary income if you want to charge for it." ●

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DEFYING GRAVITY

Christopher Harrison, founder of AntiGravity Aerial Yoga, tells **Niamh Madigan** about his latest creations for personal trainers and massage therapists

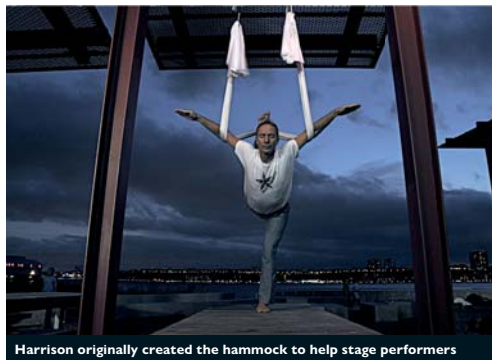
Christopher Harrison is a man whose feet rarely touch the ground. A world-class gymnast and Broadway dancer, he founded the entertainment brand AntiGravity in New York in 1991. Since then, he's designed over 400 aerial productions in settings as diverse as Broadway, Olympic stadiums and the inauguration of President Obama.

Harrison is also the creator of AntiGravity Aerial Yoga, one of the seven techniques that sit under the umbrella of AntiGravity Fitness. The restorative form of yoga has become famous for its zero-compression inversions using a silk hammock, and has gained a huge following – from celebrities like Madonna and Gwyneth Paltrow through to martial arts athletes and professional skiers. His mission: to spread health and happiness through movement.

INSPIRATION FROM INDIA

Harrison began practising yoga after visiting India in the mid-90s. He found it helped him to become more mindful and present in both his life and his movement. "I began to meditate and discovered that things started to flow easier, because I could let go of the frantic energy of living in New York City," he says.

"As a gymnast and a dancer who'd performed in *Cats*, I'd pushed my body so hard it was beaten up by the time I was



Harrison originally created the hammock to help stage performers

33. I discovered the best way to deal with compression injuries is decompression – and the one way to decompress in our society is through practising yoga."

To help eliminate compression on the spine even further, Harrison began experimenting with a hammock he'd originally created for stage performances, the silk fabric of which acted like a soft trapeze to suspend the body during yoga and help with alignment. By putting the hammock at the same height as a

ballet barre, he started adapting different moves from other disciplines such as pilates, aerial arts, gymnastics and dance. He realised that, by using its support, he could also go deeper into a yoga pose.

STRESS-RELIEVER

Two decades on and AntiGravity Fitness is available in over 400 facilities across 50 countries, with Aerial Yoga – the first discipline to be launched to market – one of the most popular offerings.

A typical Aerial Yoga class is low impact, with a focus on mobility and agility. For the more advanced, there are a number of challenging poses that work the cardiovascular system and build strength. A session lasts 60–90 minutes and can include crunches, squats, push- ▶

When you're hanging upside down, it takes away all the stress that's been pushing on the discs of your spine



AntiGravity Aerial Yoga is one of seven techniques that sit under the umbrella of AntiGravity Fitness





The AntiGravity moves are said to release endorphins and serotonin

- ups and jumping jacks. The hammock acts as a support for other moves such as inversions, handstands and front flips.

One of the main benefits this form of yoga brings over traditional practices is the ability for users to go into a zero-compression inversion. "When you're hanging upside down, it takes away all the stress that's been pushing on the discs of your spine," explains Harrison. "You're creating space, which allows the discs to hydrate and very often helps relieve back pain from the first session."

"It also releases serotonin, endorphins, oxytocin and dopamine – happy hormones that make it easier for you to cope with life, lose weight and refresh the digestive system." Other positive side-effects include improvement in flexibility,

Once suspended in mid-air, the body reacts to manipulation very differently. The benefits for the recipient are amazing

alignment, balance, joint mobility and muscular strength.

PT & MASSAGE

The latest development is AntiGravity 1on1 – a new offering for personal trainers which debuted in 15 countries in late February 2016 and which takes the notion of decompression even further.

In the first programme from the AntiGravity 1on1 stable – a 30-minute sequence known as 'D-kink' – personal

trainers use the hammock to provide variety and balance in a workout, or alternatively to create an effective cool-down at the end of a session. Possible moves in the sequence include enhanced stretching, spinal traction, the zero-compression inversion and a floating rest.

D-kink is the first of many 1on1 therapeutic sessions Harrison is designing for personal trainers.

And then there's AntiGravity Floating Massage – a specialist treatment that Harrison is currently developing. As the concept is still being created, Harrison is reluctant to share too many details, but he describes it as a complex technique that will allow a licensed therapist to manipulate the client into a weightless state (presumably using the silk hammock in some way) in combination with massage therapy.

He adds: "All I can say is that, once suspended in mid-air, the body reacts to manipulation very differently. The therapist has leverage that he/she would not be able to attain if the body were lying on a hard surface. The resulting benefits for the recipient are truly amazing."

Expect to see Floating Massage rolling out in spas by the end of the year, with Four Seasons already signed up. There's a clear opportunity for high-end health clubs to get in on the act too. ●



An AntiGravity PT concept was launched in 15 countries in February



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Making PT WORK OUT

Have you implemented the right personal training model at your club, or is there another route that might better suit the needs of your business? **Hayley Price** reports on three of the most common models for offering PT in health clubs

Personal training continues to rank in the top 10 worldwide fitness trends, coming in at #6 in the ACSM's 2016 survey. Unsurprisingly then, it remains a core offering for the majority of leisure operators in the UK – although with very different approaches evident across the sector. We take a look at three of the most common business models.

FREELANCE MODEL

Low-cost gym operator The Gym Group recruits freelance PTs across all 76 of its gyms. They wear a branded 'The Gym' uniform, but each PT takes responsibility for their own income tax, national insurance, public liability insurance, promotional materials and legal matters, taking administration away from the operator.

Once personal trainers have completed The Gym Group's comprehensive induction process, they're offered full use of the gym floor and have the freedom to negotiate prices with members, with PTs taking home 100 per cent of their revenue. In return, PTs provide a minimum of 10 unpaid hours a week on the gym floor.

The PTs are therefore prominent members of the team, undertaking member inductions, providing tours of the facility and assisting with the joining process. Being visible throughout the member journey means PTs are also more likely to build trusting relationships with new members, meaning there's less need to 'push' their services – and it works, with on average 20 per cent of new members requesting a personal trainer.

"This rent-free model helps generate a loyal, motivated personal trainer workforce, dedicated to delivering high quality and up-to-date services, which positively impacts member retention," says Jon Baker, regional manager at The Gym Group.



Jon Baker,
regional
manager, The
Gym Group

"All the personal trainers we work with have to attend a face-to-face interview. We assess how well they'll fit with our brand and whether we believe they have the soft skills necessary to thrive in our environment.

"This model was put in place at our very first gym, which opened in Hounslow back in 2007, and it's now been rolled out across our entire portfolio.

"We're very aware that we could generate an income by charging PTs a licence fee, but we've made a conscious decision not to do this. We believe that, by giving PTs ample access to members and providing the financial incentive of retaining 100 per cent of their earnings, they have a real opportunity to build a successful client base that will mean they remain loyal to our business."

By giving PTs ample access to members and allowing them to retain 100 per cent of their earnings, they remain loyal to our business

Jon Baker, The Gym Group

THIRD PARTY OPTION

GLL, the not-for-profit social enterprise, has enhanced its services by sourcing Level 3-qualified PTs through national personal training management company Your Personal Training (Your PT).

PTs pay Your PT a licence fee based on 15 sessions per month of their charging rate – so for example a PT earning £40 an hour would make a £550 monthly payment to Your PT. In return, the personal trainer receives an array of benefits including public liability insurance, business training, discounted CPD courses and social media training. The Your PT model also upholds a good member-to-PT ratio – approximately 600:1 – in order to give PTs a fair chance to run profitable businesses, avoiding the need for internal competitiveness.



GLL receives an income share from Your PT revenues

Meanwhile, for operators like GLL, it's a zero-cost business solution that provides them with on-demand, competent, qualified PTs without any associated HR burden – last year, 89 per cent of those members questioned as part of GLL's annual customer feedback survey rated the professionalism of PTs as 'excellent'.

In addition, GLL receives an income share of the Your PT revenue generated throughout its sites, creating a guaranteed secondary income stream.

GLL currently has 230 PTs across 108 leisure centres and gyms. One centre that's really seeing success under the Your PT model is Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre in Camden, north London. A team of 15 experienced PTs see on average over 450 clients each month, which through the income share model provides GLL with additional revenues of £70k per annum just from this one leisure centre.

Marco Coppola, group health & fitness manager at GLL, comments: "Before working with Your PT, we didn't have one standard PT delivery model across all our sites.



Marco Coppola,
group health
& fitness
manager, GLL

We've really benefited from having one clear, hassle-free model run by an outside organisation.

"Your PT also places a focus on training and development, so we're able to operate safely in the knowledge that the PTs working within our sites are well-informed and can offer our members an excellent service."

DUAL APPROACH

Leisure management organisation Everyone Active adopts a combined approach, recruiting both employed and self-employed PTs across the majority of its sites.

Employed Level 3 fitness 'motivators' supplement core gym floor hours by delivering personal training sessions outside of their set working hours – for which they receive 50 per cent of the net revenue along with their monthly salary, giving them additional income.

Meanwhile, freelance PTs also operate out of Everyone Active centres, paying a monthly licence fee to the business – between £250 and £600 depending on the centre's location.



Mark Talley,
group fitness
development
manager,
Everyone Active

Over time, many of Everyone's Active's employed fitness motivators drop their core hours and become freelance personal trainers, with Everyone Active taking them on in this capacity.

There are obvious benefits for the individual, who enjoys the stability of full-time employment – and the associated salary – while they build up a client base. But Everyone Active benefits too, retaining good team members – something that's key to member satisfaction and retention.

Mark Talley, Everyone Active's group fitness development manager, states: "Although a combined PT delivery model may seem confusing, the benefits we experience make this approach the best fit for us. We focus on quality and, by doing so, we attract high quality PTs – and year-on-year their revenue continues to be one of our strongest growth areas." ●



Everyone Active has employed and self-employed PTs

HARNESSING THE POWER OF HIIT

As a self-powered piece of kit, the Wattbike allows a user to go from zero to maximum effort immediately – making it a compelling choice for HIIT workouts, classes and circuits

Interval training has been a key part of elite training programmes for numerous years, as many sports require short, fast spurts of movement at high intensities. Recently this has been more widely recognised, and in 2014 high intensity interval training (HIIT) made its first appearance in the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) *Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends*, topping the list.

HIIT gets heart rates high and maintains this level, resulting in burning more fat, improved cardio health, accelerated metabolism and greater muscle mass, all in less time than steady state exercise. The body's repair cycle is pushed, meaning that between sessions and for 24 hours after, the body is still burning fat and calories.

The Wattbike is one of the few pieces of equipment that can deliver the most effective, accurate and reliable HIIT sessions. Adam Daniel, Wattbike master trainer and owner of Life:Lab – a London-based, results-driven performance hub – explains...

SELF-POWERED

The Wattbike allows a user to go from zero to maximum effort immediately, which you can't do with other equipment which has a lag, or an intensity tail-off.

From the first revolution on the pedal, you are creating power: thousands of Watts in seconds, and the ability to hit high levels

"In most circumstances, HIIT isn't intense enough. The Wattbike allows you to hit max immediately and benchmarks your performance through accurate monitoring, data and training zones"

Ricky Berry, owner of RB5 Personal Training, Nottingham

repeatedly with numbers that you can monitor and benchmark.

Being self-powered, the Wattbike doesn't dictate what the body does. Instead, it's down to the individual to power the machine. The free-wheel – it isn't fixed – means that as soon as a person stops pedalling, their numbers hit zero again. There's no continuous spinning, which means there's no hiding. The intensity starts

and stops with the individual – fantastic when monitoring a HIIT session.

INTENSITY AND ACCURACY

The Wattbike has an inbuilt 30-second test in its monitor. It's the perfect benchmark recording for HIIT as it has a fatigue factor. It's a form of reliable data, to repeatedly use over time to track the increase in maximum efforts.



Wattbike's intensity starts and stops with the individual



The new Wattbike workouts are standalone sessions

WATTBIKE HIIT WORKOUT

20 minute warm up

MAIN SET

20 secs on, 40 secs off: x7 reps

3 minute recovery

20 secs on, 50 secs off: x7 reps

3 min recovery

20 secs on, 60 secs off: x7 reps

Meanwhile the six-second test is also a great, short burst at maximal effort to create a baseline fitness measure.

Coaches and PTs deliver HIIT training but are often unable to manage intensity, or tailor sessions to the specifics of an individual. Exercise repetitions often start at maximal output, then tail off to become almost non-existent by the final repetition.

Using the Wattbike, a person can perform the submaximal ramp test first, designed to scale a level of fitness and to estimate maximum minute power (MMP) and maximum heart rate (MHR). From these, specifics to the session can be set so the workout is effective and accurate to the individual's ability, rather than relying on the inaccuracies of perceived effort.

USING VISUALS

HIIT training is all about knowing your numbers. There should be no guesswork, or estimating

"You get the resistance instantaneously from the Wattbike and you can do short bursts of effort. You're not waiting for the resistance to come up and this replicates the training we do for track and field events"

Toni Minichiello, athletics coach to Olympic champion Jessica Ennis-Hill

perceived effort. The best way to engage the user with this is to create visuals and cues so they know instantly when to increase intensity.

To aid this, Wattbike launched the Wattbike Hub app to provide everything a fitness consumer now demands: tests, workout and plans, as well as feedback and workout analysis. The new workouts are standalone sessions which the user can select and ride against. They are based on the results from the tests performed on the Wattbike and use motivational 'traffic light' colour-coded dials to show whether the user is hitting their targets.

VISCERAL EXPERIENCE

Sounds can be just as much of a motivator in fitness as visuals, if not more so.

Due to the air resistance, when people are working hard and cycling at a high wattage on the Wattbike, there is a big sound to match the effort. Feedback has told us that within a gym, studio or HIIT setting, this can be an incredibly motivating visceral experience.

The sound of someone working really hard can encourage and push everyone else to work harder, ensuring that HIIT sessions stay at a sprint, rather than falling into a slog.

The Wattbike is in its natural form of training during a HIIT session. It can easily be combined with other forms of training within a circuit setting as you can 'hop on and off' the Wattbike and be instantly working at high intensities.

The bike can be used by all, regardless of abilities or goals, as its measures can provide a baseline fitness measure that can be used consistently to show adaptations and performance over time.



No guesswork: HIIT training is all about knowing your numbers

wattbike

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ACCESSIBLE SPAS

Why aren't more health club spas disability-friendly? **Vicky Kiernander** asks the experts

We know spas and the facilities they offer provide a host of physical and mental benefits – so why aren't more of them accessible to those who arguably need them most?

New spas can be designed to accommodate the needs of those with

disabilities, but it can be far more challenging in older properties, where compromises often have to be made.

And while regulations exist to ensure access for disabled people, some experts say they're ill-defined and therefore open to interpretation:

it's down to individual operators to weigh up the cost of investing in accessible spa facilities – for what is, after all, a minority audience – against the potential cost of not paying due consideration to legislation. We talk to spa experts to get their views.



GERARD MCCARTHY
SALES DIRECTOR,
DALESAUNA

Despite DDA legislation being around for some time, many architects still don't consider the full implications of the regulations

in thermal and wet areas. The regulations are woolly and can be open to interpretation.

For example, one new-build spa we worked on recently had four thermal rooms, none of which were designed by the architect to be DDA-compliant.

One of the key issues we come across is the 1,500mm wheelchair turning circle required in 'rooms' – which applies, or can be interpreted as applying, to thermal rooms such as saunas and steamrooms. If this 1,500mm circle is applied, it either requires the seating area in most conventionally-sized saunas and steamrooms to be almost completely removed, or it makes the available space for able-bodied users so small that it's hardly worth doing. Alternatively, operators can make the rooms bigger, which has a big impact on budget for the relatively few times it will be used.

In older buildings, it's often simply not practical or cost-effective to provide full DDA compliance, and 'best endeavours' take over. You have to demonstrate that you've given due consideration to DDA regulations,

but if you can't achieve them then compromises have to be made. All of our installations take DDA into consideration, be it via DDA-compliant doors as standard or through the application of the DDA 1,500mm circle – depending on the type of use, whether it's a new build or a refurbishment, and so on.

My advice is to consider the law in the first instance. It can be woolly so ask an expert, who will always come down on the side of 'more is better' – we'd always suggest veering towards DDA compliance.

But also consider your market: will it affect your membership in a positive manner, or will it upset existing members due to the institutional appearance often created by the installation of handrails and hoists?

Despite DDA legislation being around for some time, many architects still don't consider the full implications in thermal and wet areas

Gerard McCarthy, Dalesauna



New-build spas should aim to provide disabled access to all facilities



ABI WRIGHT
CO-FOUNDER AND
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
SPABREAKS.COM

We launched 'Spa for All' to make the spa industry more accessible to a wider audience. Within the Spa for

All umbrella, we have Recovery Retreats – which offer spa days and breaks for those with, or recovering from, cancer – and Accessible Spas, which highlight venues with facilities that cater for a range of disabilities, from impaired hearing and vision to mobility issues.

We also offer packages where anyone who has a carer can take their carer on the spa break with them, to use the facilities and help them enjoy their spa experience – at no extra cost.

It's much easier for venues being built now to make facilities accessible: criteria have changed over the years and awareness about accessibility is much better than it used to be. However, for historic properties with tiny corridors and narrow stairways, it's very difficult and expensive to make the buildings accessible – or else operators may find they can cater for one or two people, but don't have the capacity to cater properly for everyone who needs improved accessibility.

For the most part, though, the people we work with very much want to make the changes. It just takes time, so it's our job to highlight how important it is and the reasons it needs to become a priority.

There's an argument to say there's not enough of a market among people with disabilities to justify the costs of implementing accessible facilities a lot of the

time, but the reality is that any of us could be in need of accessible facilities – whether temporarily, with a broken leg or an illness that affects your ability to move about, or permanently.

We also have an ageing population, so I can only see accessibility becoming more important. It's about enhancing the experience for the market as a whole.

BEST PRACTICE: MERE HEALTH CLUB & SPA

With a five-bubble rating from *The Good Spa Guide*, facilities at the Mere Health Club & Spa in Cheshire include a 20m pool, hydrotherapy pool and a thermal zone offering a salt room, steamroom and caldarium.

For guests with disabilities, there's a ramp into the spa and resort for ease of access; accessible changing facilities for male and female users; automatic doors to the pool and wet areas; a phone by the pool; wide steps into the pool rather than ladder steps; and wide corridors for wheelchairs. A carer policy has also been introduced, allowing carers to accompany their patients and use the spa facilities for free.

Claire Lomas, who became a paraplegic after a riding accident and now campaigns and raises funds to find a cure for paralysis, praises the Mere Spa as "a great spa and hotel for wheelchair users, making it struggle-free and relaxing".



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**IAN COTGRAVE****MANAGING DIRECTOR, CREATEABILITY**

Building regulations require facilities to integrate disability access from the outset. It's no longer enough to have bolt-on options – it's a legal requirement. It's vital to consider the range of users of the space, which could include wheelchair as well as walking disabled and visually- or hearing-impaired people, all of which will

impact different elements of the spa's interior design.

Doorway and corridors must be wide enough to accommodate free movement around the facility and allow for the turning of wheelchairs, whereas tactile surfaces and contrasting colours to differentiate between doors and frames can be helpful for partially-sighted or blind users. Semi-able bodied people may need grab rails for support, while smooth, uninterrupted floor surfaces can help avoid trip hazards.

Each treatment room, sauna or steamroom should be designed for compliance, to include either a dedicated area for wheelchairs or removable benches or seating where wheelchairs can be accommodated.

In the case of spas or hydrotherapy pools, deck-level access should be considered – or a dedicated overhead hoist system will need to be installed – and the height of showers and other features that need to be reached, such as ice fountains, should also be looked at in terms of accessibility.

Panic alarms with pull cords that reach the floor should be installed in all areas of the facility to ensure users can get help should they fall. These often form part of an integrated security system, which also includes flashing fire alarm beacons to alert hearing-impaired users. These need to be visible from any position within the facility, which could mean installing them in steamrooms and saunas that don't have fully glazed doors. ●

Building regulations require disability access to be integrated from the outset. It's no longer enough to have bolt-on options

Ian Cotgrave, Createability

BEST PRACTICE: LARKFIELD LEISURE CENTRE SPA

Tonbridge & Malling Leisure Trust (TMLT) and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council co-funded a £400,000 upgrade of the spa at Larkfield Leisure Centre in Aylesford, UK, this spring.

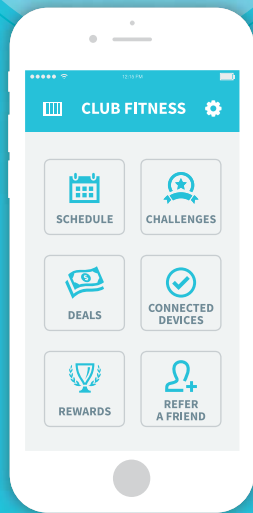
The spa was stripped back to its shell and redesigned to accommodate a wider range of facilities including a sauna, steamroom, spa bath, ice feature and showers, and to make the spa accessible. To this end, the spa now has level access and features a hoist, allowing those with limited mobility to use the spa bath. Meanwhile the sauna and steamroom are accessible to wheelchair users. A fully Part M-compliant disabled changing facility is located next to the spa.

The spa pool features a hoist

"As an inclusive operator, we want our facilities to be used by as many residents as possible to encourage mental and physical wellbeing," says Martin Guyton, chief executive of TMLT. "This is reflected in the design of the new facility. We have a wide range of users with disabilities who access the spa, including many of our GP referral users."

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A NEW SKILLS PATHWAY

The workforce agenda is back on track, says **Huw Edwards**, public affairs director at ukactive

Since taking over as ukactive's public affairs director earlier this year, it's been clear that one item more than any other is top of the operator agenda: skills.

The uncertainty that has shrouded workforce development has inhibited growth and led to a decline in trust in our sector, both internally and externally, which is why it has been priority number one for ukactive to support CIMSPA, the sector's chartered institute, in setting this right and building a new skills pathway that the industry can get behind.

The future of the workforce is such a fundamental issue with repercussions for every part of the sector – not least the people who are employed, trained and developed under our watch. It's crucial we get it right. And with the government's ongoing commitment to achieve 3 million new apprenticeships by 2020, as well as macro changes in skills and workforce across our economy – the threats and



Highly skilled employees are needed to drive the sector forward

out a comprehensive programme of reform that will put the trust back into the skills system. Many readers will be aware that this process has been ongoing

led by CIMSPA, with the aim of taking the details of the CIMSPA plan to present and discuss with employers in the sector. Over the next couple of months, ukactive will be reaching out to employers to gather feedback and develop a full picture of how we move from theory to practical implementation of the skills and workforce agenda.

It will undoubtedly take a sector-wide effort to bring all these changes on-board, but these changes are necessary and will act to support the industry over the coming years.

There can be no denying that the sector is crying out for movement on this, and I can safely say that change is just around the corner. ●

CIMSPA has set out a comprehensive programme of reform that will put the trust back into the skills system. The sector will reap the rewards of getting this right

opportunities created by automation, flexible working and technological developments – this is the time to be getting ahead of the game rather than simply catching up.

SLOW BUT SURE

The DCMS strategy, launched just before Christmas, made it clear that there had to be a change in how skills and workforce regulation was looked after, not just in the sector but across sport, leisure and physical activity for health.

But although this was undoubtedly a big step in the process, the actual mechanics of delivering the workforce development programme fell to employers, training providers and the sector itself.

We're now well on the way to delivering on that goal. CIMSPA has set

for some time, but in this field patience is a virtue, and the sector will reap the rewards of getting this right.

It's a complex area of policy with so many stakeholders to balance – which is why there has been no easy fix – but the work has been done behind the scenes to make sure the roll-out of an updated system can be smooth and effective.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Engaging operators and employers in this process is central to this plan. They are key, not only for embedding the new skills pathway and integrating the processes into their business, but in shaping how, why and when the new structure will be implemented, and on what timescale.

That's why ukactive has embarked on a series of employer engagements,

Want to know more?

If you would like any more information on the skills and workforce agenda, or to arrange a briefing, please contact me at huwedwards@ukactive.org.uk



SKILLMILL™

UNLEASH THE ATHLETE INSIDE YOU

Since its launch earlier this year, Technogym's SKILLMILL™ has been taking the fitness world by storm - putting power, speed, stamina and agility at the heart of both elite and regular training

From the corporate gym at The Body Coach HQ, to Chelsea FC's training ground and Team GB stars such as Dina Asher-Smith, Technogym's SKILLMILL™ is taking the fitness world by storm. Following a successful worldwide launch in March this year, SKILLMILL has been placed in many settings: providing a versatile functional offering on the gym floor, as a PT-based product, and for group training. SKILLMILL has also been installed at the Rio 2016 Olympic Village, where the world's most elite athletes will use the product throughout the Games.

Born from Technogym's Olympic heritage, SKILLMILL has Athletic Performance Training at its heart and is the first ever non-motorised product capable of training all the body's energy systems in a single solution. From sprinting to power development, it enables every day users to elite athletes to improve their Power, Speed, Stamina and Agility. Content and education surround SKILLMILL with a built-in QR code allowing the user to obtain programmes to follow or exercises to try, along with a dedicated functional training app and bespoke on-site training from the Technogym® Master Trainer team.

THE RISE OF FUNCTIONAL TRAINING

Fitness facilities, from major health clubs to strength and conditioning studios, continue to invest in functional training areas and equipment including SKILLMILL to meet the increasing needs of their members, offer

unique programming and provide a setting that motivates and encourages interaction between trainers and members.

SKILLMILL AS AN ADDITION TO THE GYM

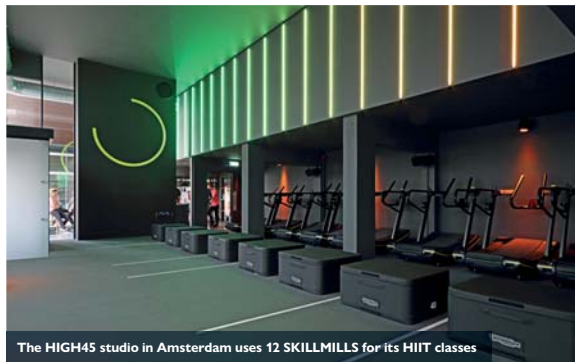
Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) has grown into the UK's leading operator of local authority leisure facilities, managing more than 200 sites. One of the first GLL sites to install SKILLMILL was Better Gym Connswater in Belfast, where two SKILLMILL were recently installed as part of a major investment.

For Deaglan O'Hagan, general manager for GLL Belfast, investing in innovative solutions such as SKILLMILL is the cornerstone of the business. "We needed

something to create clear water between us and the surrounding competition, and to meet the demands of customers. SKILLMILL ticked all the boxes by adding a different dimension to the functional spaces within the gym," says O'Hagan.

GLL predominantly uses SKILLMILL for gym floor based fitness classes and PT. "Positioning SKILLMILL by the Omnia 8 functional frame means our fitness team can add a cardio option to Omnia group training classes. We also have an excellent team of PTs who are testing the boundaries of the SKILLMILL on a daily basis.

SKILLMILL is truly versatile. Not only is it suitable for our elite GLL Sport Foundation athletes, from marathon runners to weight lifters, but also for the first-time gym-goer.



The HIGH45 studio in Amsterdam uses 12 SKILLMILLS for its HIIT classes



Elite British sprinter Dina Asher-Smith training on the SKILLMILL

SKILLMILL is truly versatile. It's suitable for our elite athletes, from marathon runners to weight-lifters, and also for the first-time gym-goer

It's vital for us to continue investing in this kind of technology to help improve the customer experience.

Working with an innovative company such as Technogym provides us with that all-important edge."

SKILLMILL AS A PT PRODUCT

The Fitness Space opened in 2010 in Ascot, led by former Olympic Athlete, Tim Benjamin. Following the great success of the first site, The Fitness Space has now opened five franchise operations with a further six planned for 2016.

Inspired by his experience in athletic training methods, Tim was keen to add SKILLMILL into the equipment offering at each of their clubs.

"As soon as I was introduced to the product I was hooked, and knew it would be great for our model. The diversity of its use suits the commercial side of our business: the requirement for education around the product is supported by our unique service offering," says Benjamin.

The Fitness Space incorporates

SKILLMILL for all aspects of their programming including small group training, PT and classes. Member response to the new equipment has been really positive: "SKILLMILL has been the best-received piece of equipment in our clubs. Its adaptability and variety in programming options allows use for all levels from first-time gym-goers to sports professionals.

The Fitness Space's success is largely down to our unique member journey process, complimented by our comprehensive technological offering. The blend provides a 360° customer experience, ensuring we stay closely aligned to our mission statement: 'Creating an environment where results are inevitable.' Our dedicated partnership with Technogym has allowed us to provide our customers with a model unrivalled in the UK."

SKILLMILL FOR GROUP TRAINING CLASSES

Launched in April 2016, HIGH45 is a new Amsterdam-based fitness studio offering highly effective 45 minute HIIT

classes. The whole concept is based around the installation of 12 SKILLMILL, with all programming utilising 3 key products: SKILLMILL, plyoboxes and free weights.

"Boutique fitness is the fastest growing trend in the fitness market, so I saw a big opportunity to set the bar in the Dutch boutique fitness market with a new concept," says Barbara Den Bak, founder and owner of HIGH45. "HIGH45 focuses on all fitness levels, with the aim of creating a real community of followers."

Offering five scheduled classes a day, HIGH45 sees 15-20 attendees per class. "We invested in SKILLMILL as it is a unique solution offering a huge variety of exercises, which makes it a great combination with body-and free-weight exercises for the best full body workout.

HIGH45's success stems from a combination of elements: a high-end club feel, premium service levels, the customer experience and the very best 45 minute workout which delivers serious results."



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THE IHRSA GLOBAL 25

What sets market leaders apart from the rest of the field? **Jon Feld** finds out

Any company that can successfully maintain a leadership position within an industry for five or more years must have success embedded in its DNA. But just as DNA strands differ, so no two companies share the same road map to long-term viability.

Every business leader can point to attributes that have helped set their company apart – a clearly stated mission and commitment to it; a highly knowledgeable and experienced management team; a well-trained, customer-focused staff – or a business model that genuinely solves a problem for consumers.

IHRSA spoke with three such organisations – Anytime Fitness, 24 Hour Fitness and GoodLife Fitness – about their rise to prominence, and their ability to maintain their front-runner status year after year on the annual *IHRSA Global 25* lists, in an increasingly competitive health and fitness club environment.

ANYTIME FITNESS

Franchisors face a particular challenge compared to other operators: they need to maintain quality and uniformity in their offerings, yet there's only so much they can dictate to franchisees – who tend to be entrepreneurial by nature – before they begin to rebel.

What sets Anytime Fitness apart, according to Chuck Runyon – the co-founder and president of the US-based, 3,200-unit franchisor – is its ability to leverage that desire for independence and flexibility to its advantage.

"We've intentionally designed elasticity into the model. Our operators have

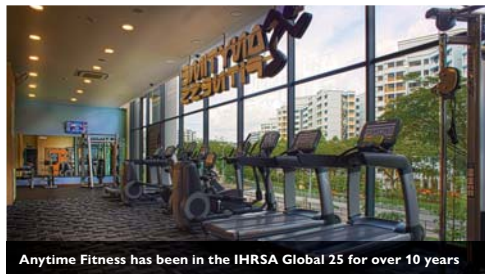
We've intentionally designed elasticity into the model to harness the varying expertise and passions of our diverse ownership group *Chuck Runyon, Anytime Fitness*

the space and autonomy they need to offer small group, functional, virtual and traditional PT to members," he explains. "This approach harnesses the varying expertise and passions of our diverse ownership group, and they appreciate the nimbleness this methodology affords."

It's challenging for a franchisor to find a balance between system-wide uniformity

and local autonomy, but the combination of a turnkey system with a bit of freedom has, says Runyon, been "very attractive to our franchise owners".

He continues: "In addition, due to the relatively small size of our gyms, we have the opportunity to understand and know our members better than many other fitness brands have."



Anytime Fitness has been in the IHRSA Global 25 for over 10 years



Anytime co-founders Dave Mortensen and Chuck Runyon



24 Hour's Napolitano and Smith

24 HOUR FITNESS

US operator 24 Hour Fitness has been an IHRSA Global 25 stalwart since the organisation began tracking the leading international players nearly 20 years ago. While the organisation can point to a wide range of factors behind its success, current CEO Mark Smith puts the management team it's had over the years firmly at the top of the list.

Smith and the new company president Frank Napolitano joined 24 Hour Fitness in 2014, with "as few changes as possible" thanks to an already strong team. However,



24 Hour members provide feedback on equipment and programmes

they have made some refinements to strengthen the company even further, as Smith explains: "We've changed our marketing to speak directly to our demographics as they grow."

"We've developed targeted campaigns for millennials, women and the growing active 50-plus audience. And the way we speak to those audiences has changed with the times too; we're making greater use of social media and digital messaging."

"As a result, we're highly engaged with our members. They provide immediate feedback on everything from

our new equipment to programmes. When you combine our industry knowledge with our ability to innovate, we have the tools to keep members involved, motivated, and moving forward to achieve their own health and fitness goals. That's a powerful combination we don't take for granted."

"It's a strong reminder about the role we're able to play in contributing to our members' healthy and active lives."

"They trust us, and that loyalty is the result of a consistently good product and service at a reasonable price point," Napolitano concludes.

GOODLIFE FITNESS

Very few companies have managed to accomplish what GoodLife Fitness has achieved. Based in Canada, the company has been thriving for more than 35 years with the same owner in place: CEO David 'Patch' Patchell-Evans – a five-time Canadian rowing champion, marathoner and avid heli-skier – has been at the helm since he founded GoodLife in 1979.

Patchell-Evans sums up the chain's strategy in one word: growth... and specifically the company's mission to have clubs wherever people want to work out.

"We've always had a key focus on growth," he explains. "We know one of the biggest factors in ensuring people continue to work out on a regular basis is having

convenient locations close to their work or home. Because of our size and breadth, Canadians can work out in our clubs almost anywhere in Canada – and in much of the US too, through our reciprocal agreement with 24 Hour Fitness."

GoodLife pursues two core goals: to meet the market's changing programming needs, and to create club models that take into account shifting member desires – what Patchell-Evans refers to as "club model diversity".

To deliver on these goals, GoodLife continues to introduce distinct, cutting-edge programming targeting different segments of the population, such as teens and older adults. It also offers leading education and development options for its

group fitness instructors, personal trainers and club managers.

The company has forged partnerships – including with Les Mills and Visual Fitness Planner – that are designed to keep members excited and engaged, and it has also established collaborations in the field of cardiovascular disease prevention and rehabilitation to address the significant health

challenges faced by Canadians. That effort has positioned GoodLife as an integral part of the country's healthcare solution.

"On the staffing side, we've introduced a strategic recruitment strategy to promote lifelong career opportunities with GoodLife," says Patchell-Evans. "And we consistently update older clubs based on changing demographics."

In terms of "club model diversity", GoodLife has both unisex and women-only clubs, and a budget club chain called Fit4Less by GoodLife (or Éconofitness by Énergie Cardio in Quebec); this brand has grown to almost 100 facilities since 2011.

Ultimately, concludes Patchell-Evans, GoodLife measures itself not just against the best clubs in the world, but also against the best businesses in the world. ●



Patchell-Evans founded GoodLife in 1979

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

To learn more about the companies that make up IHRSA Global 25 listings as well as the current state of the health club industry worldwide, download The 2016 IHRSA Global Report at ihrsa.org/ihrsa-global-report



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Spa for the people

Following the success of the first Tranquillity Spa, sauna and steam specialist Dalesauna has designed a second luxury spa for Northumberland

Local people in Cramlington, Northumberland, UK, now have access to the latest wellness facilities after the launch of a new spa at one of the region's largest leisure centres.

Sauna and steam specialist Dalesauna designed and delivered the new Tranquillity Spa at the Concordia Leisure Centre, which is undergoing a major refurbishment.

Northumberland County Council and Active Northumberland – the charitable leisure and cultural trust which operates leisure facilities on behalf of the council – have invested £3.1m in Concordia Leisure Centre to modernise facilities and bring new family entertainment and activities into the town centre.

As part of the redevelopment, the centre has also received a new climbing facility, a dedicated cycling studio, a new fitness studio and a revamped café, while the Cramlington Library is also being relocated to the leisure centre.

Working with Northumberland County Council and Robertson Construction, Dalesauna has created a luxurious new spa for the centre, hosting a range of heat experiences designed to promote health and wellbeing among all members of the surrounding community.

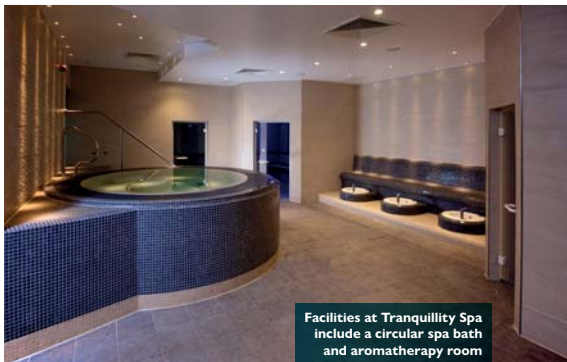
Formerly home to a disused sauna, the centre now offers a full spa which includes a steamroom as well as an aromatherapy room, where the gentle warmth of steam is infused with natural aromatherapy essences to relax the mind and body.

The 3-metre circular spa bath is ideal for boosting circulation, making it suitable for those with arthritis or suffering joint pain. It's also an effective way to treat sore muscles after a workout.

The three-person tilted foot spa with heated bench, ice feature and monsoon and bucket showers complete the offer, creating a calm and relaxing environment for users to enjoy.

ONGOING SUCCESS STORY

The project follows the success of the Tranquillity Spa at Ashington Leisure



Facilities at Tranquillity Spa include a circular spa bath and aromatherapy room



The quality is extremely high, demonstrating how public sector spas can compete with, and even exceed the standards of, spas in the private sector – Gerard McCarthy



Centre, which opened at the beginning of this year. The £21m centre was awarded the RIBA North East Award this spring, and its Tranquillity Spa was also designed and delivered by Dalesauna.

Hailed as a sanctuary to escape the pressures of everyday life, the spa at Ashington features a spa pool, aromatherapy room, monsoon showers, ice feature and foot spas in addition to manicure and pedicure bays and three treatment rooms offering a variety of treatments to suit all budgets.

The range of facilities has proved a huge hit with locals, with more than 1,600 visits

recorded to the thermal experiences within the first four weeks of opening.

Active Northumberland has created a Thermal Spa Experience around the new Dalesauna facilities, which offers users a journey of relaxation through the different hot and cold therapies.

"We're delighted to have completed another Tranquillity Spa. The quality of facilities is extremely high, demonstrating once again how public sector spas can compete with, and even exceed the standards of, spas in the private sector," says Gerard McCarthy, sales director at Dalesauna.

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Driving sustainability

Faced with growing competition in the local area, Circadian Trust teamed up with direct debit specialist Debit Finance Collections to boost its community presence

A social enterprise committed to wellbeing within the community, Circadian Trust operates five leisure centres and two dual-use sports centres across south Gloucester.

At the time of Circadian's 10th anniversary last year, it had an average customer stay of seven to eight months under a flexible membership, while at the same time there was a proliferation of competitive budget gyms in the area. The trust was looking for new ways to boost membership and compete in the marketplace. It turned to direct debit company DFC, which focuses particular attention on the leisure industry, to achieve this goal in partnership.

EXCEEDING TARGETS

Since working in synergy with DFC, Circadian has been able to introduce a new membership package to promote the benefits of using its centres. The new Lifestyle Membership grants customers 12-month access across the operator's seven sites, thereby providing greater choice than the local budget gyms are able to offer.

"DFC made the transition really easy for us," says Ben Beasley, Circadian's director of commercial development. "We've been able to offer the customer more membership package choices, and are better positioned as a fantastic value offering in an ever-changing marketplace."

"The new 12-month membership is now available for up to £29.95 a month, whereas our flexible membership is £38.95. The increased membership length counteracts the lower yield from each member, so both we and the customer benefit."

Boasting a 98 per cent collection rate with the trust, DFC has been able to take away the chore of lengthy admin tasks, allowing Circadian to spend more time on improving its facilities for its customers.

The partnership has also driven growth. Circadian had set an 8 per cent growth rate goal over four years, but DFC helped the trust to bring this goal up to 10 per cent within the first year – the result being a 16 per cent rise in



memberships since the previous year and a drop in attrition. "It's one of the biggest growths we've seen since the trust was formed in 2005," confirms Beasley.

TECHNOLOGICAL DRIVE

"DFC is constantly innovating and bringing new products to market," continues Beasley: the trust has used services such as FastDD, which allows members to join online, and Data Retrieval, which helps businesses keep track of their payment records.

"We've benefited from an improved service where we're not worried about collection, with access to more accurate and flexible reporting and statistics, helping us tidy up our processes. We can receive these reports on a daily basis if we want.

"We're now discussing opportunities that might assist us in becoming even more commercial in our approach."

"The whole solution provided by DFC has been easily and efficiently integrated with our current Xn system, and we're very happy with the impact our payment portal has had on our business."

Having improved its overall service and made positive adjustments internally, Circadian is now looking to the future and has little doubt that it will continue to exceed all its targets.

"We expect to continue our positive trend, and are looking forward to working with DFC to use its new products," concludes Beasley.

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We have access to more accurate and flexible reporting and statistics, helping us tidy up our processes – Ben Beasley



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Healthy competition

Installed across the Speedflex business, heart rate monitoring system MYZONE is integrated into every high intensity circuit session and now plays a key role in the group's retention strategy

► An alternative to the gym or a bootcamp, Speedflex offers high intensity circuit training sessions for small groups, led by a PT. The concept was developed in Newcastle after Graham Wylie acquired the world rights in 2010.

Speedflex now has a number of sites in the UK – including London, Leeds, Aberdeenshire, Surrey and Southampton – as well as overseas in markets such as Dubai and Dallas, US. There are approximately 2,500 members across the network, in addition to users paying for short-term sessions and package options.

The concept uses a combination of cardiovascular and resistance training to provide a full-body workout. The Speedflex machines respond to the force of users, allowing a professional athlete to work out alongside a pensioner. Sessions are high in intensity, low in impact and short in duration.

FREE TRIAL

MYZONE has become integral to every Speedflex session since being installed across the business (except Dallas) in January of this year.

"We were really impressed with the speed and smoothness of the MYZONE system and the live feedback you get with the product. It's very easy for both trainers and customers to use," says Tommy Wanless, Speedflex training manager.

"Our bread and butter is high intensity interval training. Being able to show that's exactly what we're delivering, in real time in the studio, is a really powerful and motivational tool."

Customers can trial MYZONE for free during the Speedflex trial and introductory packages. Those who become members or take up a package can purchase MYZONE for use in the studios.

"To date, 90 per cent of Speedflex users have taken up MYZONE after they've experienced the benefits of having access to that level of data, both during and after a training session," says Wanless.



CREATING A BUZZ

The MYZONE app has proved an additional bonus, creating a buzz around all Speedflex centres and leading to some healthy rivalry between customers.

"Customers love the post-session feedback that MYZONE provides. The social and community aspect of the system means people have a very positive association with it, sharing their session summaries on social media and engaging with one another, which is great for us," says Wanless.

Speedflex has now started to incorporate MYZONE into its retention marketing strategy by creating in-centre competitions and prize draws for customers who exceed a specific number of MEPS (MYZONE Effort Points) in a given

timeframe. The organisation will further integrate MYZONE into its operations later this year and will also use the system in its annual Speedflexathon challenge.

"MYZONE is very important to us. It levels the playing field of exercise for users, which is something Speedflex also does with the inclusivity of our sessions. The uniqueness of Speedflex machines means users work at their own pace, in the same way that MYZONE rewards people for working at their own pace," says Wanless.

"We also like being able to integrate heart rate monitoring into our customers' lifestyles, allowing them to use their monitors both in and outside of our studios, promoting a change in behaviour."

www.myzone.org
www.speedflex.com



90 per cent of Speedflex users have taken up MYZONE after experiencing the benefits of having access to that level of data – Tommy Wanless



STAY STRONG

Strength training and building muscle mass is key to a long and healthy life, according to new research – but be warned, big muscles don't necessarily mean strong muscles

STRENGTH FOR LIFE

It's widely accepted that regular aerobic exercise is key to a long and healthy life, but now new research suggests that hitting the weights could be just as important in avoiding an early departure.

In a new analysis by US researchers at Penn State College of Medicine, published in *Preventive Medicine*, older adults who met twice-weekly strength training guidelines had lower odds of dying.

Over a 15-year period, older adults who strength trained at least twice a week had a 46 per cent lower risk of premature death than those who did not. They also had 41 per cent lower odds of cardiac death and 19 per cent lower risk of dying from cancer.

This was in addition to the more obvious benefits of strength training for older adults – namely improved muscle strength and physical function – as well as improvements in fighting chronic conditions such as diabetes, osteoporosis, low back pain and obesity.

Many studies have previously found that older adults who are physically active have a better quality of life and a lower risk of early mortality, but far less data has been collected on strength training specifically – possibly because strength training guidelines are newer than recommendations for aerobic activity.

**Older adults who
strength train at least
twice a week have a**

46% lower risk
of premature death
than those who don't



Strength training: A wide range of benefits in older age

DOES SIZE MATTER?

A study by Manchester Metropolitan University in the UK has found that bigger isn't always better when it comes to muscles – because muscle strength doesn't increase proportionately as the muscles grow in size.

The research was carried out on individual thigh muscle cells taken from a group of volunteers: 12 bodybuilders, six power athletes (such as sprinters) and 14 control subjects – men who were physically active but who didn't weight train. Researchers stimulated the muscle cells and analysed the contractions.

By also measuring the size of the cell, they were able to calculate the force produced per gram of muscle. The higher the force, the better the muscle quality.

The individual fibres of the bodybuilders' muscle cells were very large compared to the control group, and were able to generate forces that far exceeded those of other people. However, the individual cells had a lower force per gram of muscle than muscle cells from people who didn't weight train – suggesting that excessive muscle growth was having a negative impact on muscle quality.

The power athletes had similar quality muscles to the controls, but were able to produce the force quicker. Their muscles were more powerful. "The training method seems to have an impact on muscle quality, which is of great importance in improving performance," says lead researcher professor Hans Degens.

All that said, it's important to recognise that weight lifting has an impact beyond muscle size: it can also improve the function of supporting tissues and blood vessels, as well as stimulating the nervous system to use more of the available muscle.

In short, reduced muscle force at a cellular level doesn't necessarily mean impaired function at a whole body level – which is why bodybuilders are still able to perform



significant shows of strength. Indeed, as a general rule, the bigger the muscle the more force it can produce.

Nevertheless, as the muscle gets bigger and bigger, there isn't a proportional increase in its quality – there would appear to be an optimal size beyond which the gains are minimal.

The new study – which was published in *Experimental Physiology* – shows that neither the size of the muscle, nor an individual muscle cell, can be used to accurately predict its overall strength.

**Building muscle mass
is more important
than shedding fat**

MUSCLE vs FAT

Maintaining a high level of muscle mass is key to living a longer life, regardless of a person's level of fat mass, according to new research.

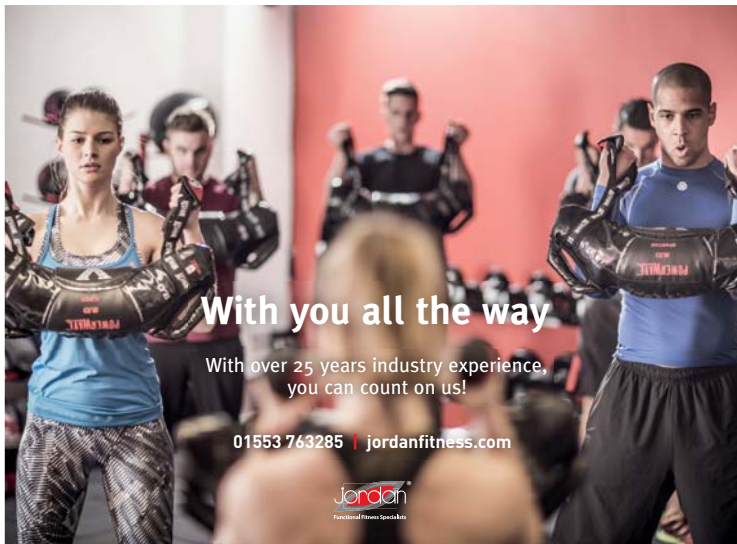
The analysis from the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA in the United States found that cardiovascular disease patients who have high muscle mass and low fat mass have a lower mortality risk than those with other body compositions – although high muscle mass is the more important factor.

The researchers examined data from the US National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (1999–2004) of 6,451 participants who all had cardiovascular disease.

The findings highlight the importance of maintaining muscle mass in order to prolong life, rather than focusing on weight loss – even among people who have a higher cardiovascular risk.

The authors suggest that clinicians should encourage their patients to participate in resistance exercises as a part of healthy lifestyle changes, rather than focusing primarily on weight loss.

The research findings were also published in the *American Journal of Cardiology*. ●



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Strength in depth

Health Club Management gets the lowdown on the latest strength and conditioning equipment.

For more information, log on to fitness-kit.net and type the company name under 'keyword search'



Reebok's new kettlebell has a bigger, more practical handle

HEAVY LIFTING

RFE International's new range of Reebok strength-building equipment includes Olympic bars and steel dumbbells. The 10" 22kg Power Bar – made from steel – is for moves such as the clean and press, jerk and bent-over row. Additional 50mm Olympic weight plates can be loaded onto the bar.

For use with the Power Bar and Olympic Bar, Reebok's Olympic bumper plates range from 2.5kg to 25kg and use rubber to ensure the loaded bar can be safely dropped without risk of damaging either the plates or the lifting platform.

Dumbbells also feature in the product line-up, ranging from 5kg to 50kg for progressive functional training and increasing muscle mass. The hexagonal dumbbells have a black knurled steel handle, and a neoprene coating to lessen noise, floor damage and wear and tear.

The new Reebok kettlebell is designed with lots of space between the ball and handle, and weights vary from 4kg to 50kg.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **RFE**

SLEEK STRENGTH

Pulse Fitness has launched a new and extended range of strength and plate-loaded equipment, with a focus on sleek and modern design.

The Strength Line includes 26 stations in ultra-modern white or silver, including an enclosed weight stack, easy to clean carbon covers and smooth handgrips. The line is compatible with Pulse's activity tracking software, PulseMove.

The Plate-Loaded Line includes 10 pieces of equipment including chest press, row, shoulder press, incline chest press, wide chest press, lat pull-down, low row, leg press, calf and rear kick machines with black upholstery on a black frame.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **PULSE**



Pulse's new Strength Line



New bar gives full-body workout

URBAN BAR FOR ALL

The Urban Strength Bar from Physical Company brings together strength, flexibility and balance. Designed to make calisthenics training accessible to everyone, the system promotes four types of movements: planks, lower body exercises, upper body exercises and links.

By enhancing movements with increasing levels of leverage, the Urban Strength Bar is designed to improve performance, reduce the risk of injury and help develop muscle tone by lengthening muscles through big, expressive movements.

The Urban Strength Bar allows people to work the whole body in the frontal, sagittal and transverse planes of movement, either in single exercises or linking all planes of movement together.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD

PHYSICAL COMPANY

LIQUID CORE

Jordan Fitness has introduced the water-filled CorMax range to give athletes and fitness enthusiasts another tool in developing and maintaining a strong, stable core.

Drawing on many muscle groups in just one exercise, the CorMax bag is filled with water.

As the water sloshes side to side, it pulls and pushes the user in every direction, triggering the stabilising core muscles.

The less water in the CorMax products, the harder they are to control; the more water, the heavier and more stable they become.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **JORDAN FITNESS**



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Engage the mind

Kate Corney finds out what some of the latest mind-body products can offer.

For more information, log on to **fitness-kit.net** and type the company name under 'keyword search'

BETWEEN THE LINES

The In-Trinity Board from Matrix is an incline-training platform designed to help build strength, deepen flexibility and improve balance, co-ordination and agility.

Created by fitness expert Johnny G, it's designed to allow movements to be carried out below the board incline, letting users to train in new ways.

The board's hourglass shape enables users to comfortably straddle the board for easier transitions between incline and decline movements.

Accessories include the In-Trinity sticks for light resistance, balance and improved hand-eye coordination; quick-connect In-Trinity straps provide resistance and stabilisation during more challenging movements; ergo-grip rails provide stability for deep stretches; and a detachable comfort mat provides traction and removes easily for cleaning.

In-Trinity can complement existing exercise regimens, including yoga practice and programming.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **MATRIX**



The In-Trinity Board enables on-board or under-board exercises

BALL AND STRAP

Merrithew is introducing two new mind-body products onto the market.

The Mat Strap Plus is a mat carrier and resistance tube for use in strength training exercises that sculpt and tone. Also designed to improve yoga practice, the strap can assist in performing extensions and deeper poses, as well as stretching out muscles after workouts. It can carry a mat up to 10mm thick.

Merrithew's new Twist Ball looks like a conventional medicine ball but has a shifting centre of sand. The ball challenges the user to control the moving centre of gravity through the exercises. Soft, neoprene and can be fitted over an ankle for leg extensions and lifts.



fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **MERRITHEW**

Basi: For all levels of fitness



DYNAMIC PILATES FOR ALL

Turkish fitness firm Basi Pilates has introduced a new line of dynamic pilates equipment customisable for all user levels. The Basi Systems line includes a reformer, reformer with tower, reformer combo, trapeze table (cadillac), arm chair classic set, arm chair barrel set, ladder barrel, spine corrector, wunda chair, wall tower and wall unit.

The range has been designed by Basi's founder Rael Isacowitz to offer exceptional standards of engineering, high quality materials and optimum interaction between the exerciser and the exercise equipment.

The range offers customisation to accommodate varying needs and skill levels among both pilates enthusiasts and professionals.

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD **BASI**

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Mindfulness techniques can focus on pain awareness and the emotions linked to that.

PHOTO: WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Mind over matter

Mindfulness-based stress reduction has been shown to help relieve chronic lower back pain

While health club classes such as pilates may help people suffering from back pain, combining them with mindfulness-based activities could improve results even further according to recent research.

Mindfulness-based stress reduction focuses on increasing awareness and acceptance of moment-to-moment experiences, including physical discomfort and difficult emotions.

A study published in the *The Journal of the American Medical Association* in March* showed that, among adults with chronic lower back pain, both mindfulness-based stress reduction and cognitive behavioural therapy resulted in greater reduction in pain when compared with usual care.

Mindful interventions

Daniel C Cherkin and colleagues at the Group Health Research Institute

in Seattle, US, randomly assigned 342 adults aged 20 to 70 years with chronic lower back pain to receive mindfulness-based stress reduction, cognitive behavioural therapy, or usual care.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (training to change pain-related thoughts and behaviours) and mindfulness-based stress reduction (training in mindfulness meditation and yoga) were delivered in eight weekly two-hour groups. 'Usual care' included whatever other treatment, if any, the participants received. Average age of the participants was 49 years; the average duration of back pain was 7.3 years.

Meaningful improvement

The researchers found that, at 26 weeks, the percentage of participants with clinically meaningful improvement on a measure of functional limitations was higher for those who received mindfulness-based stress reduction (61

per cent) and cognitive behavioural therapy (58 per cent) than for usual care (44 per cent). The authors wrote: "The effects were moderate in size, which has been typical of evidence-based treatments recommended for chronic low back pain...These findings suggest that mindfulness-based stress reduction may be an effective treatment option for patients with chronic low back pain."

Jennifer A Haythornthwaite and Madhav Goyal of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, US, wrote that the challenge is how to ensure that these mind-body interventions are available.

"Most physicians encounter numerous obstacles in finding appropriate referrals for mind-body therapies that their patients can access and afford," they said. "High-quality studies such as the clinical trial by Cherkin et al create a compelling argument for ensuring that an evidence-based healthcare system should provide access to affordable mind-body therapies."

A recent study from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, US, also found that mindfulness in the workplace is shown to improve employee focus, attention and behaviour. ●

These findings suggest that mindfulness-based stress reduction may be an effective treatment option for patients with chronic low back pain

* Cherkin, DC et al. Effect of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction vs Cognitive Behavioural Therapy or Usual Care on Back Pain and Functional Limitations in Adults With Chronic Lower Back Pain. *JAMA*, March 2016

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