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YOUR GREATEST DIFFERENTIATOR IS YOUR TALENT

Rockstar Instructors are identified as the single most important factor for gymgoers when choosing a live class, favored by 28%, ahead of the quality of music (24%) and type of class (21%).

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Mega players

Having a portfolio of more than 1,000 health club locations is the aim of ambitious operators, with this elite category growing fast, creating new dynamics in the market

As the industry grows and more operators achieve global 'mega player' status – deemed to be in excess of 1,000 locations – the saturation of the market is increasing and we're entering a new phase of accelerating aggregation and churn.

At the moment, the biggest players include companies such as Planet Fitness with 2,291 locations, Basic-Fit with 1,097, RSG with 1,000, Xponential with 2,100, Anytime Fitness with 4,000, Snap Fitness with 2,000 and F45 with 1,750.

At this kind of scale, brands become their own 'vortex', able to sell an increasingly broad range of services to customers and offering cross-portfolio access, such as that afforded by Xponential's recently-launched X-Pass.

This 'all locations' offering is for customers who want to use locations from across the company's entire estate – which currently has 10 brands covering everything from rowing, yoga, lifting, running and cycling to barre, stretching, boxing and Pilates.

By operating across so many wellness sectors, Xponential is able to keep its members within its own universe for most if not all of their fitness needs, through the X-Pass programme.

In addition to enabling brands to effectively aggregate their own estates – instead of using an external service, such as Classpass – this kind of scale also enables them to create operating clusters to drive economies of scale and improve market visibility, staff training and career opportunities.

As mega players emerge there's also an accelerating churn in relation to real estate, as market forces determine which brands thrive best in which locations. A steady stream of sites is now changing hands as operators work to optimise locations.

We're seeing deals whereby one brand is taking over locations previously run by another and they're thriving under new ownership where they'd previously failed.

In our interview on page 34, industry veteran, Dave Courteen addresses this issue, saying: "Operators must be very clear in their messaging, so people find their way

PHOTO: ANYTIME FITNESS



Anytime Fitness has around 5,000 locations globally

At this scale, brands become their own 'vortex', able to sell an increasingly broad range of services to members

to a club they're likely to stick with – be clear in who you're targeting – try not to be all things to all people. Provided we're clear in our messaging, I believe we can be successful at keeping people engaged with our clubs."

The final piece of this jigsaw puzzle is input from entrepreneurs who are building businesses to sell to mega player brands. We're seeing start-ups aligning new health clubs with the systems and processes that will enable them to achieve a profitable exit by selling out to a specific operator as investment continues to flow into the sector.

Liz Terry, editor
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Write to reply

Fuel the debate about issues and opportunities across the industry. We'd love to hear from you – letters@leisuremedia.com

Building better facilities is a priority

Sharron Davies, MBE

Your article on the employment crisis in the sector (*HCM* 3 2022, page 54 or www.hcmmag.com/staffing) raised valid points about what needs to be done to address staff shortages. I particularly applaud Jo Cherrett's call for an honest conversation about the living wage.

This especially applies to swimming teachers. Two members of my family have left swimming teacher jobs because of poor pay. With a national shortage of 8,000 swimming teachers (Swim England 2021), addressing pay will go a long way to attracting and retaining these professionals at a time when their skills are needed more than ever. Children have already lost two years of swimming;

we can't afford for them to miss any more because of a lack of teachers.

But let's also be frank about the condition of our workplaces. So many of our leisure centres are outdated and in a shocking state of disrepair. Staff who work in these centres are constantly having to deal with complaints about faulty equipment, dodgy showers and smelly changing rooms, which is both frustrating and can lead to low morale. Is it any surprise staff get fed up and move on?

Some of the UK's leisure stock is in crisis. A leisure centre where I swam in the 1990s is fighting for its future. Cornwall Council is trying to secure a new operator for Wadebridge



Modern, sustainable buildings are key to redefining the sector

Leisure Centre after confirming it's not in a financial position to provide ongoing funding to keep it open. It has permanently closed Ships and Castles Leisure Centre in Falmouth for the same reason. More than 200 pools have closed since the pandemic and Swim England fears we could lose 2,000 by the end of the decade if we continue on this path.

We need facilities that meet the needs of users and provide attractive places to work. Sustainable buildings are key to redefining the sector. This is why I'm an ambassador for Paragon Structures, providers of insulated tensioned membrane buildings. The company was born out of a desire to have a direct impact on health and physical activity by building affordable, yet state-of-the-art facilities, which is one of the reasons the company was selected as a solution partner by Swim England.

As an athlete and sports presenter, I've been fortunate to experience some of the best facilities in the world. I believe the UK can offer bright, airy and energy-efficient venues which can be built at a fraction of the cost of traditional buildings and significantly faster too.



Davies: 'Pools are lacking investment'

Mental health
was debated at
active-net 2022

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ROXES

We must commit to supporting mental wellbeing

David Monkhouse, director of leisure-net and active-net

I was interested to read the feature on employment issues in the latest issue, (*HCM* 3 2022, page 54 or www.hcmmag.com/staffing) especially during National Stress Awareness month, as it really highlighted that, no matter how much people love working in our industry, that alone is not enough, without better pay and conditions.

The impact on our workforce's mental health has never been clearer; demonstrated by the 2022 *Workforce State of Mind* survey, launched at this year's active-net by Workplace Mental Wealth, which found 57 per cent of respondents had experienced a mental health issue in the last 12 months.

While three-quarters of those with a line manager feel the manager cares about their mental wellbeing, only 11 per cent said someone regularly checks in on their mental health at work and 48 per cent said they would not be honest with an employer if they felt they needed time off work because of a mental health issue.

We need to do better, and it's one of the reasons we were keen to theme this year's event around



“
*It's time to
give the same
importance to
mental health
as we do to
physical health*”

mental health, with a keynote revealing the survey's top-line results and provoking a discussion around how employers can do more and breakout sessions discussing the wellbeing of our workforce, customers and communities.

After-dinner speaker, Jamie Cartwright, held the room in silence for more than an hour as he told his powerful story of child abuse at the hands of football coach, Barry Bennell, and how he turned his life around.

The talk had a profound effect on delegates, with many approaching me to say how touched they were by his honesty and declaring their organisations' mental health pledge.

I hope these frank discussions encourage more employers to sign up to the Good Work pledge at www.workplacementalwealth.com and engage with next year's survey, so we can continue to gauge and improve how we're doing as an industry.

It's time to give the same importance to mental health as we do to physical health. We hope active-net 2022 put a spotlight on how our sector can help. ●

HCM people




*Choose consistent over perfect.
That's the long game. It's never too
late to pivot to that mindset*

Gunnar Peterson

Chief of athletics, F45



Peterson has a background in PT, and as an NBA strength coach



The 'Gunner Peterson' workout will help build the strength and endurance of an athlete

Tell us about your new gig with F45. What's happening?

I'm their new chief of athletics and am curating exclusive new workouts for the F45 studios.

The first rep-based workout is a hybrid session combining cardio, resistance, agility and core movements, ensuring members get the best of both worlds for ultimate full-body burn.

The 'Gunnar Peterson' workout is based on a pyramid style of training – people will push themselves to the max by increasing their weights as they move through each circuit, helping them build strength and endurance like an athlete.

Why F45, and what's your professional view on their workouts?

It's a perfect fit – they do what I do, but on a larger scale and with way better technology. I love it – feels like hand in glove.

They're terrific, and that's what drew me in. The workouts are efficient, realistic and well

planned-out from micro to macro level. It's easy to progress, and easy to regress when needed.

How will you improve the workouts?

I hope to add some simple pieces of equipment that provide versatility from a programming standpoint, as well enjoyment to the end user.

The programming, the member interaction, and the trainer interaction is what I'm really looking forward to. The whole athletics team at F45 is an absolute dream to work with.

Why do you see functional fitness as fundamental?

Functional fitness means that it also translates to other aspects of your life, from loading your groceries, to moving up the leaderboard at your tennis club, to keeping up with your active

toddler, or to being a lot more resistant to injury and illness. So it means that everyone wins.

What strengths will you bring to F45 in your new role?

I bring 30 years of one-on-one, F45-type training to the team, along with cueing, exercise sequencing, industry connections, and relationships – and this to an already finely tuned machine.

Where do you fit into the management team?

I'm on board with the athletics team and it has been very smooth thus far. More family than team and that suits me to a 'T'.

How long have you signed up for?

I'm signed up for three years, but I'm looking to be there for as long as I can be of use. There's so much

growth and opportunity. From the CEO down, F45 is poised to make massive changes in the fitness industry.

Tell us a little more about your professional background

I've been a personal trainer in Beverly Hills, as well as an NBA strength and conditioning coach, and strength coach to a variety of athletes – male and female.

I've done group exercise, workshops, clinics, speaking engagements, and now the biggest challenge – F45 Athletics!

What major trends do you see emerging when it comes to exercise?

The honing of the hybrid model, which is strength plus conditioning, plus movement, all brought to life with futuristic technology.

F45 is at the forefront of this and showing no signs of slowing down. I'm excited to be a part of it.



Peterson will be creating exclusive new workouts for F45 studios

Peterson's hybrid model involves strength, conditioning and movement



Have we devoted enough attention to recovery?

I think that we're starting to do so. The science is now in, and we're hearing the message loud and clear. Listen to the experts, listen to your body, and you will be able to experience results beyond your wildest dreams.

How does exercise fit into the wider discipline of wellness?

Exercise is the cornerstone of wellness in my opinion. It sets the table for good choices in the rest of your life. It's the best way to prime your body AND your mind for improvement.

Gyms that offer comprehensive programming to a wide demographic are the future. Inclusion not exclusion wins the day.

In your opinion, how do you feel the pandemic has changed the health and fitness sector?

Initially I think many people were simply left to fend for themselves. But many health and fitness providers quickly adapted and created ways to follow along at home and remain connected with the mothership, which is key.

Human beings are social by nature and we need that connection.

F45 created an app that allowed you to stay in that 'team training, life changing' mindset, even when many couldn't get into the studios.

That type of innovation is what the network really needs. Hats off to them for leading from the front.



Gyms that offer comprehensive programming to a wide demographic are the future. Inclusion not exclusion wins the day

What's your own personal wellness regime?

Being consistent. Not perfect, but consistent. I never miss my workouts, I mix them up, my food isn't perfect but it's on point, I work at recovery, and I try to keep stress at a manageable level.

What advice do you have for people who struggle to stick to an exercise regime?

Choose consistent over perfect. That's the long game. It's never too late to pivot to that mindset. ●



We want Grndhouse to be everywhere: in gyms, hotels, on holidays, at home – it's boutique fitness in your hand

Louis Rennocks

Co-founder,
Grndhouse

PHOTO: GRNDHOUSE

You started off with a digital platform and then launched a studio – what's the story?

We were five best friends (me, Jay Copley, Connor Minney, Nik Naidoo and Izy George) who helped take Barry's in the UK from one studio to, I think it was eight, by the time that we left. The pandemic came so we lost our income and started doing online classes on our own individual platforms – just like every other trainer at the time.

We were doing strength training though, which really took off for each one of us. We looked at the market, saw that no one was owning the online strength training lane, which is what we've been doing all our careers, and decided to create Grndhouse.

Where did the name come from?

Grndhouse came from "the grind in our house" and there's no "i" in GRND because we're a team.

What happened next?

We put all our existing productions into one place to build the business and launched a web-based prototype platform in January 2021. We got one thousand subscribers within the first month, which was a surprise, because our target had been 250. We made back the money we'd invested within the first hour. Business was going so well that we decided to seek investment.

What funding did you raise?

In November 2021 we secured a £1.5m investment for the launch of a fitness studio and app. Passion Capital was our lead investor, there were several angel investors, and the rest was Seedrs crowdfunding. We spent £1m in a couple of months and one year later we opened our studio in Paddington, which allows our online clients to come down and get the in-person experience too.

What was your vision for the Grndhouse studio in Paddington?

We wanted it to be a cool place to hang out, somewhere you didn't have to bring a hairdryer or shampoo, but have a workout in a home from home. We wanted the workouts to be like a show. You can chill out in 'the calm before the storm', then go into the studio and the lights change – we wanted to create a different experience.

You hired Zynk as designer, tell us more about the look of the space.

We went for burnt orange because we felt this colour was universal, it wasn't masculine or feminine. We didn't do a deep dive into branding, it came about naturally. The light tunnel creates a good Instagram moment. You can take a picture and show the world where you are.

TECHNOGYM/GRNDHOUSE

There are 500
different Grndhouse
workouts available

How is Grndhouse different?

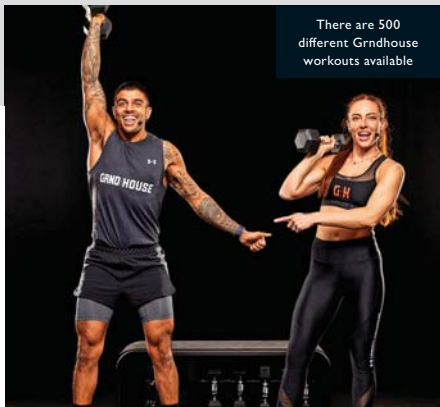
We found that with most online fitness content there isn't any direction on where to start. To create some unity, we created a weekly structure running from Monday to Sunday. We offer 500 workouts going from lower body, to core and abs and upper body. It is total body conditioning that has high-impact and low-impact days. Strength training is so much bigger than these workouts, though. Our app will provide different types of strength training to help people achieve their fitness goals in other activities.

Why did you decide to focus on strength training?

We all have a passion for strength training, so it was natural for us to gravitate towards it. There's always been a stigma around strength training, where you have to be male and lift super heavy. The strength training we're creating is different. It is high intensity, uses weights and is not your typical Olympic lifting. We're changing the meaning of strength training and what it means to the consumer.

How do you get over some women's fear of becoming too muscular?

It's just educational. The average amount of muscle a woman will put on if she is a professional bodybuilder and lifts six times a week is probably about 2-3lbs a year. Unless they are really pushing



*We want to break America,
get more funding and be the
leaders in strength training*

the bodybuilding agenda, they will just condition the muscle to be healthier, leaner and stronger.

How many subscribers do you have now?

It's still in the low thousands, but this is because we switched our marketing off and concentrated on organic growth. We focused on nurturing our current subscribers, finding out what they wanted from the product and then making it into what they need it to be.

How many do you hope to have by the end of 2022?

We're aiming to have 10,000 subscribers by the end of this year, which we think is possible. We've had steady growth and our attrition rate is low. Generally, in this industry, people tend to stick at things for up to six weeks then stop, but our average member stays five to six months, and they complete, on average, two-and-a-half workouts each week. Many fitness companies just concentrate on getting people in, but we're trying to create a lifestyle change.

Can you tell us more about the app?

We've been developing the app for 15-16 months now and we're almost ready to launch. From there we will build the product up into what Grndhouse will eventually be, which includes personalised strength

Grndhouse HQ
is designed as a
home from home





Our goal is to make strength training accessible to people outside of London and around the world

training with a big community element. I think there is scope to push into mindful training as well. The initial goal is to get our existing users onto it. Phase 2 will be building up the categories, community and metrics. After that we'll have our big launch.

What strength-training categories will the app offer?

When you open the app, you can choose what strength training you want to do, such as running, pre- and post-natal, post-injury, pre-injury, sports specific categories, like football, swimming, tennis, and so on. It's key we have an over 60s category too. The first version of our app won't be AI-assisted, but it will become so as we progress over the next 12-18 months. AI needs numbers and so we must build our community for the machine learning to work.

How will AI drive personalised training?

Over time the app will start to learn what you like and what strength training you want to do – your interface, for example, would look completely different to mine. It will still have the weekly structure, but will recommend workouts according to your body type. You can use a heart rate monitor, too, which will also give you a hustle score, based on the amount of time you've spent in different HR zones.

The algorithm will start to learn how to make progress on that score and push harder. It will allow people to strength train and feel the progression as well.

Why is strength training important?

Strength training is overlooked. As we get older our bodies get weaker, so it's about building the foundations we need as we go through life. Strength training brings many health benefits, such as improved bone density and increased life expectancy, but a big aspect is the mental side. There's nothing like becoming stronger and feeling more confident. Many people push the cardio to lose weight or get a quick result, but the more muscle mass you have, the faster your metabolism will be, making it easier to lose excess weight. If we lift weights, we burn fat for up to 48 hours, whereas it's only 12 hours after cardio.

Tell us about the kit

We have 40 Technogym Benches in the new London studio – we love its design, as it makes it easy to film a straight-through workout.

We originally started with it because people were working out at home and we realised it was great size and look for the home and Technogym understood our vision and helped us offer members the bench and hex dumbbells.

Technogym
Bench at the new
Grndhouse HQ
in London



Online we're evolving beyond it because it can create a barrier – people think they might need one to do our workouts, but they don't. There will still be bench workouts, but 75 per cent of workouts just need dumbbells, 10 per cent require bands and 15 per cent are bodyweight only.

Your Instagram resembles mainstream TV – why is this part of your approach?

We're a content provider at the end of the day. We want you to be watching Grndhouse for more than just a 45-minute workout, so it's about creating content that's interesting and people engage with.

Will you build more studios?

Our flagship store, the Grndhouse HQ, will be the only one. We don't think the in-person experience is here to stay. Our goal is to make strength training accessible to people outside of London and around the world. Instead of £25 a class you can do a whole month of classes on Grndhouse.

Will you be doing more fundraising?

It's a case of going bigger. We want to break America, go to American VCs and get more funding. We want to be the leaders in strength training – Peloton and other providers class themselves as an at-home product, but



The club interior has a unisex orange palette

we want Grndhouse to be everywhere: in gyms, hotels, on holidays, at home. It's boutique fitness in your hand.

How soon will you approach the US market?

We're thinking about going to the States this summer for our next round of funding.

How profitable is Grndhouse?

We won't be profitable for a long time as we put all our money back into R&D. What I can say, though, is that we matched last year's revenue in Q1 this year. ●



We've set ourselves the initial goal of developing 100 Feel Electric sites, using a cluster model

Jon Wright

Founder and CEO, Feel Electric

Tell us about Feel Electric

We're aiming to be the market leaders for EMS studios in the UK – we think there's a huge opportunity to be the first genuine UK operator.

We've registered the Feel Electric name as a trademark so we can roll out the brand.

Why EMS?

Because it works! I've been doing it for about 18 months and it's got me back to my pre-wedding shape of nearly 20 years ago and sorted out my long-term back issues. We're getting our members fantastic, life-changing results.

Who owns the company and where has the investment come from?

It's 100 per cent me.

How many locations are you planning?

We're growing region by region across the UK with the intention of going nationwide. We've set ourselves the initial goal of developing 100 sites, using a cluster model.

The Yorkshire region is now set up with four sites and a fifth site in Sheffield opening this month.

We've just secured our first site in the north west and expect to have five sites in this region by year-end.

The current open-rate is one a month and we expect to accelerate to opening two a month in 2023 as we ramp up the business.

Why should people use EMS?

It's far more effective than a gym workout and appeals to the 80 per cent of the market who don't want to go to the gym.

What's your target audience?

EMS benefits everyone, from athletes to people with disabilities and from active to sedentary people and also people of every age – there literally is an unlimited target audience.

Why has the UK been a little slow to adopt EMS – do you see that changing?

That's been a huge advantage to us, as the market is wide open and I absolutely see that changing as the UK rapidly adopts EMS.

Feel Electric is a great concept and we're expecting strong growth, based on trading so far and our plans to scale the business.

In terms of adoption, it was exactly the same with budget health clubs when we started, so I've been on this journey before.

[Editor's note: Wright, a serial entrepreneur in the fitness sector, launched the Xercise4Less chain of budget gyms with his first club at Xscape Castleford in 2010, and successfully grew the chain to around 50 clubs before they were acquired by JD Gyms out of administration during the early stages of the pandemic www.hcmmag.com/JD/X4L.]

Do you have delivery partners?

Our chosen partners are Miha for the EMS setup and InBody for body composition analysis and we feel we're with the right partners and getting great support.

Tell us about the health MOT you're offering

We use Inbody's 77 model to measure people's body composition – it's a great way for members to track their results. We also have access to the Inbody academy for staff training. ▶

Wright is a serial entrepreneur and was founder of Xercise4Less





Feel Electric comes with its own tech platform for client engagement

PHOTO: STYLISH+RANSOM

Tell us about the people who are delivering the sessions

We're hiring qualified PTs to deliver sessions, so they have strong understanding of the physiology and exercise effects of EMS, and can motivate customers and answer any questions they have from an expert vantage point.

Do you also tie in with some sort of nutrition offer?

Yes, we're just developing a nutritional package to sell alongside the EMS sessions to round out the offering and create an additional income stream.

Do you have a retail offering?

Not yet, we're focusing on our core EMS offering in the short-term. But we'll be looking at various options that we might retail to our customers going forward as the business develops – we're actively looking for ideas.

Will you go global?

There are no plans to go beyond the UK at this stage, as we see this market as being wide open to the opportunity and having huge potential.

You're a serial fitness entrepreneur, are you finding the learnings transferable?

Yes, I'm using the huge learning curve that was Xercise4Less to maximise the opportunity to develop and grow Feel Electric. Having successfully rolled out a national chain before is a huge advantage.

What have been the high and low points?

I think I'm now experienced enough to have the wisdom to know that there are no such things as low points and high points, there's just timing!

For example, when we did the private equity transactions for Xercise4Less, I thought at the time they were high points, however, I changed my mind once I understood the nature of the private equity firm we'd partnered with – but then, when the pandemic hit, I changed my mind back again.

When Xercise4Less was put up for sale during the lockdowns, I tried to buy it back and was down to the last two bidders, but I was outbid by JD Gyms.

That day felt very low, but in hindsight, it was the best thing that could have happened – for many reasons, including this new opportunity to develop the Feel Electric brand. ●

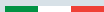


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Basic-Fit memberships up by 46 per cent

Basic-Fit opened a record number of 72 clubs in the first quarter of 2022. Fifty-five in France, eight in the Netherlands, two in Belgium and seven in Spain, despite closures and restrictions caused by the pandemic.

The operator grew by 182 clubs in 2021, of which 136 were in France. Overall, the network now consists of 1,087 clubs: France, 583; Netherlands, 224; Belgium, 207; Spain, 63; and Luxembourg, 10. According to the fitness chain's Q1 trading update,



PHOTO: BASIC-FIT

Basic-Fit opened a record number of 72 clubs in the first quarter of 2022



PHOTO: BASIC-FIT

We recorded a strong increase in memberships of more than 400,000 in the quarter

Rene Moos

memberships are up 46 per cent year-on-year, and revenue in Q1 of 2022 was €162m against €10.7m in the same period last year.

The figure would have been even higher if it hadn't been for a two-week COVID-19 shutdown in the Netherlands, during which time Basic-Fit did not collect membership

fees. The average revenue per member per month amounted to €21.51 – the same period in 2021 brought in €1.70.

"We recorded a strong increase in memberships of more than 400,000 in the quarter," said Rene Moos, CEO of Basic-Fit.

More: http://lei.sr/9n5V5_H

Berlin cools its pools to make political point

Those looking to have a dip in Berlin's famous heated outdoor pools this summer will be in for a chilly surprise.

Water temperatures at the German capital's 16 gas-heated lidos – or Sommerbäder – will be maintained at a point two degrees celsius lower than normal.

The decision to lower the temperature was made by the pools' state-funded operator, Berliner Bäder-Betriebe (BBB), which said it was "doing its bit" towards reducing German reliance on Russian gas.

Speaking to the media, a spokesperson for BBB said: "We have made this decision because we wanted to make a contribution to the reduction of gas imports."



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/LARNEOIACTORY

Water temperatures at the 16 heated lidos will be kept two degrees lower

It's not the only political gesture made by public leisure facility operators in the capital city since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February – since early March,

anyone with a Ukrainian passport has been given free access to all of Berlin's public baths.

More: http://lei.sr/g5X6s_H

Urban Gym Group raises €16m to fuel growth

Multi-brand fitness chain Urban Gym Group (UGG) has raised €16m in capital. The funds will be used to drive company growth through acquisitions, branching out to new locations and territories, and expanding the management team.

Currently, UGG's brands include TrainMore, Clubsportive, High Studios, BTY CLB and TRIB3 – for which it has a master franchise agreement for the Benelux region.

The lead financiers are Rabobank and Dutch Mezzanine Fund (DMF), which invested €5m in loans and €11m in equity, respectively. Investments have also been made by several directors of the company, although joint CEOs, Marjolijn Meijer and Jordy Kool, remain the majority shareholders.



PHOTO: URBAN GYM GROUP

We're now directing our focus towards expansion

Marjolijn Meijer

Meijer said: "We're now directing our focus towards expansion on one hand – through takeovers of gyms or locations with sports destinations – and on the other hand, we continue to look for suitable properties in major cities."

More: http://lei.sr/9r8X9_H



PHOTO: URBAN GYM GROUP

Clubsportive was UGG's first brand

COVID-19: Fitness First pulls out of Hong Kong

Evolution Wellness has closed all its Fitness First operations in Hong Kong. The pandemic's impact and the government's Zero COVID strategy proved too much for the operator, which has put its entire Hong Kong business into liquidation with Kroll.

Former Fitness First members are being offered the chance to migrate their membership across to clubs run by Pure Group.

"Fitness First, like Pure, takes its commitments to members very seriously and wanted to help them use their credit with Pure," Gavin Black – interim CEO of Pure Group – told HCM. Black recently took over from founder and former CEO, Colin Grant.

Another leading Hong Kong chain, Goji Studios, shut down all eight of its clubs at the end of 2021, while Pure Group itself is closing a single site in a cluster of clubs in Hong Kong, as well as its OFC Fitness club in Singapore.



PHOTO: PURE GROUP

Fitness First members can transfer their membership to Pure Group clubs

The fitness sector in Hong Kong has been burdened by a harsh financial climate since the first lockdown in March 2020 and for some, the combined effect of a diminishing client base, unrealistic rent bills and unplanned bank loans

has led to insurmountable debts.

"Overall, I understand that over 300 boutiques have been lost over the course of the pandemic," Black told HCM.

More: http://lei.sr/m8N7n_H

Pure Gym plans to double in size by 2030

Pure Gym has revealed it's planning to double the number of clubs in its portfolio, with a target of reaching more than 1,000 clubs by 2030.

The low-cost gym chain said it plans to open 500 new sites in the UK and Switzerland, as part of a strategy to "take full control of the attractive markets".

Pure Gym currently has 301 UK clubs but plans to reach between 700 and 900 sites between 2026 and 2028, meaning an opening rate of 66 clubs a year. In total, Pure Gym opened 28 new clubs during 2021 – 24 in the UK, three in Saudi Arabia and one in Switzerland, so this announcement represents a major increase in its opening rate.

Pure Gym will also look to accelerate the roll-out of its franchise operations in new and emerging international markets, including, Japan, South East Asia, China, India, North Africa and the US, where it



Pure Gym recorded a net member gain of 160,000 during January and February

opened its first three clubs recently under the Pure Fitness brand.

"Our growth strategy will consolidate and exploit our position as one of the large-scale 'mega players' in the global, value fitness landscape,"

said CEO Humphrey Cobbold.

"We have a very clear plan to deliver growth across the business globally in the next few years."

More: http://lei.sr/p5G9w_H

GWS to host functional medicine symposium



The hybrid event will be held at the Anantara Siam Hotel in Bangkok

The Global Wellness Summit (GWS) is gearing up for its Future of Functional Medicine Symposium scheduled for 20 May in Bangkok, Thailand.

Functional medicine is described as a preventative, healthcare-meets-wellness approach that focuses on addressing the root cause of disease.

The upcoming hybrid event is a partnership between the GWS and functional health organisation Miskawaan Health Group. The event will bring together medical specialists and scientists from around the world to explore new directions and future opportunities in the field of functional medicine.

The schedule will include a series of keynotes and panels, with more than 25 professionals presenting.



Functional medicine is such an important and timely topic

Susie Ellis

"Functional medicine is such an important and timely topic, as a prevention-focused wellness philosophy that could impact so many lives and tackle rising healthcare costs," says Susie Ellis, chair and CEO of the GWS

More: http://lei.sr/z8a3T_H

1Rebel snaps up Core Collective and Sweat It

1Rebel has acquired Core Collective as part of a pre-pack administration deal, along with London studio Sweat It which it bought from liquidators in February.

The Core Collective clubs, located in High Street Kensington and St John's Wood, London, will continue to operate under their current brand for the time being, but with updates being implemented to "improve the customer experience".

1Rebel founder, James Balfour, told *HCM* the brands will merge soon, with the Core Collective clubs taking the 1Rebel name.

"I'm delighted to announce growth on all fronts as we emerge from the pandemic," Balfour told *HCM*, adding: "The 1Rebel team keeps going from strength to strength and



PHOTO: 1REBEL

The next couple of years will be an exciting chapter for the business

James Balfour

the next couple of years will be an exciting chapter for the business."

In addition to growing the UK portfolio, the company is also expanding its international presence in Australia and the Middle East, where it will open a 12,000sq ft flagship.

More: http://lei.sr/M9u7p_H



PHOTO: 1REBEL

1Rebel is expanding globally

New David Lloyd club is revamped Virgin site

David Lloyd Leisure (DLL) has opened a new club in Cricklewood Lane, London. The launch completes phase one of a £5.25m redevelopment initiative that forms part of the company's mergers and acquisitions strategy.

The site was formerly owned by Virgin Active and the acquisition is part of DLL's plan to open 40 more clubs in the UK alone.

"We're delighted to be open and welcoming our very first members to David Lloyd Cricklewood Lane," said



PHOTO: DLL

DLL's new club on Cricklewood Lane is part of the group's larger growth strategy



PHOTO: LINCOLN JO MILLER

We believe the members will be thrilled by the gym and group exercise facilities

Jo Miller

GM, Jo Miller. "We believe they'll be thrilled by the state-of-the-art gym and superb group exercise facilities."

David Lloyd Leisure's recent slate of asset acquisitions was built on the operator's strong recovery from the pandemic, which saw record membership levels and a return to pre-COVID-19 numbers by July 2021. A strategic management reshuffle to

leverage post-pandemic opportunities in the market swiftly followed with COO Russell Barnes taking over the role of CEO from Glenn Earlam, who became executive chair.

Barnes has been focusing on the "bounceback" and Earlam on acquisitions.

More: http://lei.sr/D4k7q_H

FIBO 2022 attendance signals bounce back

After a three-year hiatus, FIBO's return on 7-10 April 2022 heralded a strong restart for the world's largest health and fitness trade fair.

The event kicked off with a sell-out edition of the European Health and Fitness Forum, organised in partnership by FIBO and Europe Active, which featured presentations by research partner Deloitte.

The four-day trade show attracted 51,270 people from 109 countries, including Spain, France, the UK, South



FIBO 2022 welcomed a total of 51,270 visitors from 109 countries



Products developed over the past two years could now finally be showcased to the industry at large

Silke Frank

Africa, Australia and the United Arab Emirates, with the attendance being seen as a strong baseline from which to rebuild as the industry comes out of the pandemic.

Visitors reported brisk business and an energetic and positive atmosphere.

"For the fitness industry, FIBO 2022 proved the kick-start everyone

had long been waiting for," said Silke Frank, event director. "Products developed over the past two years could now finally be showcased to the industry at large."

FIBO's all-time high attendance record, pre-pandemic, is 150,000.

More: http://lei.sr/e3C3z_H

Mintel flags up latest US exercise trends



80 per cent of US consumers exercise to improve their mental health

More than a third of consumers are working out more than before the pandemic, but they miss the personal connection that the gym offers, reveals a study on the US fitness market from Mintel.

The research, Exercise Trends – US – 2021, confirmed that mental health, not just physical fitness or weight loss, is now the leading secondary motivator for exercising, with 80 per cent of US consumers saying they work out for their mental and emotional wellbeing.

Data gathered during the research also shows that "only 15 per cent of US exercisers feel digital platforms have eliminated the need for gyms".

The health club community – and the benefits it brings, from motivation to inspiration and friendships – is



The role of gyms in consumers' lives is so much larger than simply physical exercise

Rebecca Watters

one of the key reasons gym-goers say they are returning, said Mintel.

"The role of gyms and health clubs in consumers' lives is so much larger than simply physical exercise," said Rebecca Watters, associate director at Mintel.

More: http://lei.sr/M4S3Z_H

Harm Tegelaars returns to fitness industry

Harm Tegelaars has returned to the fitness industry by joining the board of directors at HUSSE.

Tegelaars founded the Cannons Group in 1980 and built it from one club into a national brand, with more than 3,500 employees and 60 sites, which were absorbed into the Nuffield business. He is also a former president of Europe Active and a founding director of the FIA – now known as UK Active.

His remit will be to drive the growth of HUSSE's portfolio of consumer partnerships and to use his understanding of the sector to deepen relationships with operators.

HUSSE has partnerships in place with a number of major companies, including AXA Health, The AA, BUPA, AMEX, O2 and Tesco Clubcard.



PHOTO HUSSE

Harm is one of the true innovators in our sector and we look forward to harnessing his drive and energy

Jamie Ward, HUSSE

Tegelaars said "The fitness industry has been a lifelong passion for me. I'm delighted to return." HUSSE CEO, Jamie Ward, added: "Harm is genuinely one of the true innovators in our sector and we look forward to harnessing his drive and energy."

More: http://lei.sr/7J7A7_H



PHOTO EUROPE ACTIVE

Harm Tegelaars has joined HUSSE

Fiit plans chain of hybrid fitness studios

Cross-platform fit tech business, Fiit, recently hit a £1m crowdfunding target in seven days.

The fundraiser was for a 2.68 per cent share of the business.

The funding will be channelled into developing a chain of hybrid fitness studios in the US and UK, as well as a range of integrated equipment in partnership with Assault Fitness and new mat classes.

Fiit launched in 2017 as a fitness app with the aim of making exercise a habit



PHOTO FIIT

Fiit is collaborating with Assault Fitness to create a range of exercise equipment



PHOTO FIIT

We've outlined plans to build a range of industry-first, interactive functional fitness experiences

Daniel Sheppard

for everybody, but has also expanded into in-club connected studios.

"We're in a position where we've not only tested the UK's first connected gym model with The Gym Group and WIT London, but we've also outlined plans to build a range of industry-first, interactive

functional fitness experiences," says CEO, Daniel Sheppard.

"We also want to invest back into our members' experiences."

Over 1,000 investors have already supported the company on Crowdfunder.

More: http://lei.sr/Z7k9R_H

Core Health and Fitness acquires Wexer

Core Health and Fitness has acquired digital fitness content provider, Wexer Holding, for an undisclosed sum.

According to Wexer, the deal will provide it with the “funding to scale its business” and drive digital adoption across the global health club sector.

Core Health and Fitness – a portfolio company of US-based private equity firm Gainline Capital Partners – said it will now use Wexer as a vehicle for significant acquisitions to consolidate the digital fitness sector.

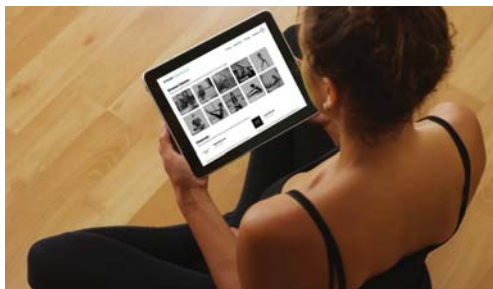


PHOTO: WEXER

Wexer said the deal will provide it with the ‘funding to scale its business’



PHOTO: WEXER

This is a momentous step for Wexer, granting us the support we need to scale our business

Paul Bowman

Jason Leone, president of Core, said: “Coming out of COVID-19, commercial customers across gym and vertical market categories are placing an increased emphasis on connected fitness.

Paul Bowman, Wexer CEO, added: “This is a momentous step for Wexer, simultaneously granting us the support,

investment and distribution we need to dramatically scale our business and accelerate towards our mission of hybridising the fitness industry.

Core’s brands include StairMaster, Schwinn, Nautilus, Star Trac and Throwdown.

More: http://lei.sr/r6s3N_H

Egym buys Gymlib to grow corporate portfolio



PHOTO: EGYM

Egym is planning to enter more new markets

Fitness tech firm Egym has acquired French corporate fitness and wellbeing business Gymlib for what has been described as a “high double-digit million” purchase price.

Gymlib offers a corporate wellness membership service for companies and their employees and has a network of more than 4,000 gyms and health clubs in France and Belgium.

Founded in 2014 by Sébastien Bequart and Mohamed Tazi – and later joined by Grégoire Véron – Gymlib works with more than 600 companies, from SMEs to large corporates, including Deliveroo, PayFit, Danone and GRT Gaz. The company has now raised more than €15m, with investors such as Breega Capital, Alyan Group and Fa Dièse.



PHOTO: EGYM

From the first meeting onward, it was clear that both companies belong together

Philipp Roesch-Schlenderer

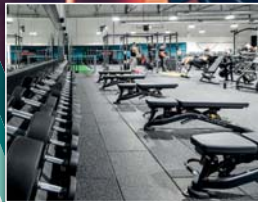
Philipp Roesch-Schlenderer, Egym CEO, said: “When Sébastien Bequart, Grégoire Véron, Nicolas Stadelmeier and I started discussing joining forces a year ago, it was clear that both teams and companies belong together from the first meeting onward.”

More: http://lei.sr/6B4A5_H

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When you have a budget gym round the corner charging £15 a month and you're charging £60, you need to sparkle

Courteen says
integrating clubs into
the community is key

DAVE COURTEEN

The fitness sector has an unprecedented opportunity to become a credible partner in ensuring the health and wellbeing of the nation, says Mosaic Group MD and new chair of the UK Active Membership Council. He talks to Kate Cracknell

The last time *HCM* sat down with the industry legend that is Dave Courteen was – quite incredibly – 10 years ago.

At that point, Mosaic – the business he originally co-founded as a contract management

company under the Fitness Express and Imagine Spa brands – had just ventured into owning clubs for the first time, with the acquisition of The Shrewsbury Club.

In that interview – which you can read at www.hcmmag.com/Courteen2012, on page 30 – Courteen spoke passionately about creating a people-led, locally-focused community as a USP for the club. Yet he ended the interview with his trademark honesty, saying: "But talk is cheap. Plans are easy. What I hope is that, if you were to interview me again in five years' time, I'd be able to talk just as enthusiastically about all the things we've done, rather than all the things we hope to do."

Well, it's taken us 10 years rather than five, but nevertheless it's a perfect time to check in, as Mosaic celebrates its 35th birthday this month and Courteen steps into the high-profile role of chair of the UK Active Membership Council.

► **What news from The Shrewsbury Club Dave?**

We owned the club for five years with venture capital firm Downing Corporate Finance, and in that same period also bought Holmer Park – a health club and day spa just down the road in Hereford.

At that point, Downing wanted to pause and see how it all worked out, but as a result we didn't spend enough money on Shrewsbury, which we'd bought out of administration. The way I describe it, the club survived but didn't thrive for those first five years. It worked well, the members loved it, but it didn't sparkle, and when you have a budget gym round the corner charging £15 a month and you're charging £60, you need it to. You need to demonstrate a bigger difference than slightly better facilities.

So in 2017, we bought back the business with the support of a high net worth individual. It was a real turning point. We spent the remaining money necessary to refurbish and upgrade Shrewsbury – around £1m – and in the process completely rejigged the offering to make the club very family-oriented.

We decided to give free membership to children under the age of 16, which felt quite brave at the time: the club had about 2,000 members, of which around 250 were kids, so we lost about £25,000 a year in junior membership.

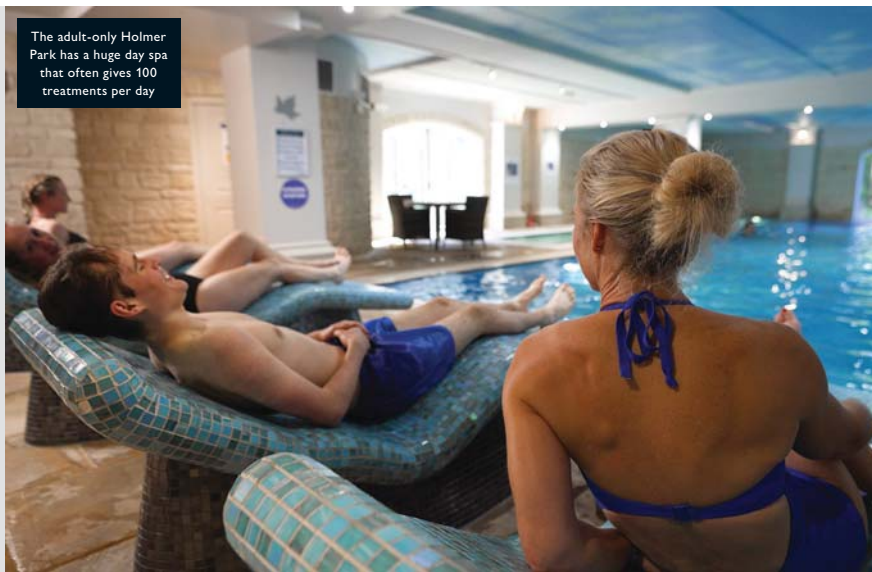


I've never believed in the hybrid model. People want to be around people. That's why clubs are so powerful, and that's what we need to play on

However, my rationale was that children were now only able to join with an adult and we needed just 80 more adult memberships off the back of the 'kids go free' offer to match previous revenues. Beyond that, I believed it was a compelling offer that would grow the club – and so it proved. We now have 5,500 members – 3,250 adults and 1,250 kids, plus a waiting list for juniors – and the club has been a great success.

It's been a real lesson in understanding where you could sit in the marketplace, how you could

The adult-only Holmer Park has a huge day spa that often gives 100 treatments per day



The company invested extensively in the Shrewsbury Club. (Below) Toddler yoga



PHOTO: JIMMY DAWSON/SHAWCROSS

be different, then executing and communicating that really well. And that, of course, relies on great people, which we're fortunate to have at Shrewsbury in the shape of strong management and hard-working, friendly teams across every department.

The Shrewsbury Club now offers 35 activities a week for kids to join in for free, a big café/bar hub, a soft play area, and we're about to build a day nursery and a second pool: one for families and another for members to swim lengths. It means families can come in, do their various different activities, then meet up in our hub afterwards – and that hub has never been busier.

How did you fare during the lockdowns?

It was frustrating in many respects. We'd had a year of strong growth at Shrewsbury post-refurbishment, with January and February 2020 just fantastic months for us, and then in March we were shut.

Looking at it positively, had the pandemic arrived 18 months earlier it would have been very difficult for The Shrewsbury Club to survive. We had at least got ourselves into a position where we were able to cope with that long period of closures. It wasn't particularly pleasant and it certainly ate into our finances, but at least we were able to get through it.

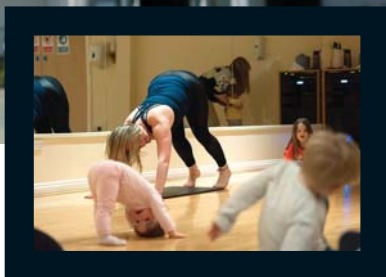


PHOTO: JIMMY DAWSON/SHAWCROSS

And now, coming out the other side, both Shrewsbury and Holmer Park have recovered really, really well. We re-opened just 25 per cent down on our pre-COVID membership numbers, compared to the industry norm of around 30–35 per cent, and by September 2021 we were back to where we were pre-pandemic, which was well ahead of where we were expecting to be.

I think that's partly because we worked really hard at staying in touch with our members during lockdown, to make them feel there was still some sense of community. We did do online classes, of course, but we also wrote to our members a couple of times a month, just chatting, telling them what the staff were up to, trying to sound positive and encouraging.

We also created some little TV-style series of online member phone-in and chats. These weren't necessarily about health, although ▶



We're seeing people using the club as a base from which to work, breaking to do a class before getting back to work again. They like the atmosphere and to be around people

- obviously there was a bit of that. We were just chatting generally about some of the issues people had at the time: keeping kids entertained, getting them to do their schoolwork, trying to stay positive in lockdown and so on.

We've enjoyed some incredible sales figures at both Shrewsbury and Holmer Park since we re-opened, too, which I'm sure is partly down to our members using social media to talk about what their club did for them during lockdowns.

What about contract management?

The contract management side of our business has been heavily affected and is taking a little longer to recover than our standalone health clubs; most of our contract management sites are attached to hotels and hotels have had it really tough. We've won lots of new contracts, though: Portsmouth Football Club, for example, and some more hotels with health clubs and spas that we will operate.

We've also continued to work really hard on developing our staff, still viewing our contract management clubs as the perfect places to train people up and get them qualified, so we can promote from within across our whole business. That's been a core value for us throughout our 35 years: we know it's our people who make our clubs successful.

It's been a tough couple of years, but contract management is what we grew up on as a business and remains a core part of what we do.

Tell us more about Holmer Park.

Holmer Park is a really successful and very beautiful club, with a totally different offering from Shrewsbury. It's adult-only, with around 2,500 members, and has a huge day spa.

We bought it in 2012 from an owner who wanted to retire, and we took over a very successful, very good, well-functioning health club with a few treatment rooms on the side. What we've since



The upgraded Shrewsbury Club now has 5,500 members



PHOTO MOSAIC SPA

Courteen says investment in the popular Holmer Park has seen a return

done is turn it into a full day spa, growing the business that way: the spa now turns over close to £700,000 a year, regularly seeing 100 visitors a day.

Day spa guests enjoy a fabulous thermal suite – huge pool, two steamrooms, sauna, foot spas, vitality pool, hydrotherapy spa pools, ice fountain, hot showers and so on – and relaxation areas, as well as a treatment. Meanwhile, our members have access to the thermal suite included in their membership and also get discounts on treatments, including our rasul mud chamber.

It has, without a doubt, been our most successful owned club, sitting right in the sweet spot of what we've done at Mosaic over the years – namely, operating a high-quality spa alongside a high-quality health club. With a great team and a great manager, we've been able to build up the spa while at the same time growing the health club membership. Every time we've spent money on Holmer Park – the group exercise studio we built there recently, for example – it's worked really well and we've got a return.

For many of our members, Holmer Park is a lifestyle: they come and do a workout, maybe use the pool, then chill out in the café. With working patterns having changed so much, we're also seeing more people using the club as a base to do some work, breaking to do a class and have a bit of food before getting back to work again. They like the atmosphere, they like to be around people, and generally we've made sure our café/bars are really good.



PHOTO MOSAIC SPA

We believe café/bars can't be an afterthought in a club. The high street is full of high-quality artisan coffee shops. If you want people to enjoy their post-workout coffee with you rather than heading elsewhere, you need to provide an experience that hits the mark. We've done that at both Shrewsbury and Holmer Park.

Are owned clubs the way forward for Mosaic?

We already have a third club, Riverhills, which came to us as an opportunity during lockdown. Located on the outskirts of Ipswich, it's a very similar model to Holmer Park in that 50 per cent of its turnover will come from memberships and 50 per cent from day spa guests, so fits nicely into the Mosaic mould.

We completed the acquisition in June 2021 and will now invest in improving the facilities, putting in ▶



Operators must be clear in their messaging so people find their way to a club they stick with. Try not to be all things to all people, and we can be successful at keeping them engaged

- a Rasul mud chamber, creating a larger coffee bar, upgrading the poolside and so on. It was already a pretty successful club, but we see opportunities to take it to the next level, plus it also spreads our risk across three sites rather than two.

Our focus will then be on getting the most out of our existing clubs and creating a more stable operation: we certainly aren't aggressively wanting to go out and build a big portfolio. Nevertheless, if opportunities come along to add another club that fits what we're trying to do, we're keen to do that. I believe we have the resources in the business to run more clubs, and of course it brings economies of scale.

However, even as we grow, we will still not create a single-brand portfolio with commonalities across all sites. Each of our clubs is and will remain unique, operating under its own brand, and there will be no obvious signs that they all belong to the same company. We want all our clubs to be built with an affinity around a local community rather than around the ownership brand – and that's where we are with Riverhills right now, trying to connect with as many local businesses and networks as we can, to integrate ourselves into the local community so we can become a really active member of that community.

What do you see as the long-term impact of COVID?

Sometimes, out of the darkest times comes your finest hour. By affecting the less active and less healthy far more than it did active people, COVID reinforced the value of exercise in a very powerful way. I think, in the long term, we will look back on this as an experience that was tough at the time, but that was ultimately good for the industry.

My other strong view relates to a commonly-held belief that clubs now have to have a digital offering


– a hybrid model. I've never believed that. For me, what the pandemic has reinforced is that people want to be around people. Our classes, for example, have grown busier than any other aspect of our clubs – to the point that we're building more studios at Shrewsbury – and it's because members want to meet up, be in a community, work out with like-minded people. I believe that's why clubs are so powerful, and that's what we need to play on.

That doesn't mean there isn't a group of people who are very happy to have their Peloton and work out at home, but those people existed before lockdown and that's fine. It doesn't stop me passionately advocating the need for higher-end clubs in particular to be built on making members feel valued and connecting them with others, in-person. That's what people want, and it's a lesson our industry as a general rule still has to learn.

I also think there's a learning for hotels coming out of this. Looking beyond our contract management sites to the sector as a whole, traditionally hotels have seen gyms and spas as a necessary evil – a box to tick while spending as little as possible. They've been seen as a marketing tool, a way to drive room occupancy, rather than potentially profitable departments in their own right.

However, as conferences and meetings continue to take place online and bookings remain low, hotels are beginning to ask if they might use their conference spaces in a better way – and they're turning to wellness, and particularly day spa.

Some hotels will have local gym memberships too, but that's a very hard market to compete in. Day spa, meanwhile, plays right into hotels' hands, not least because they can cost-effectively do great food – an important part of the spa day experience – thanks to chefs already being on-site. Day spa is a huge opportunity for hotels to turn wellness



Courteen: 'There's now real clarity around what UK Active is and does'

into a profit centre. At Mosaic's hotel-based spas, 95 per cent of guests are there to use the spa; only 5 per cent of spa visitors are hotel guests.

Let's talk about your new role at UK Active.

UK Active demonstrated its power and value to the industry so much during the pandemic that I wanted to put my shoulder to the wheel to help the organisation continue to move forward. I therefore offered to step into the role of chair of the UK Active Membership Council, having previously been vice chair.

I can best sum up ukactive's influence and achievements during the pandemic like this: at the end of the first lockdown, clubs were the last places to re-open because government viewed us as high-risk. By the end of the third lockdown – after huge efforts by UK Active to prove we weren't high risk, but an important part of the solution – we were one of the first to re-open. Those extra eight, maybe 10 weeks of being open... they

made a massive financial difference to my business, and I'm sure to lots of other businesses as well. That in itself will have paid for my membership to UK Active for easily the next 15–20 years.

I think there's also now real clarity about what UK Active is. It's built a reputation for data and industry insight, helping us understand the business and the industry we work in. It influences government. It guides our management of the risks that could affect the whole industry. And perhaps most importantly it encourages participation, with a bold ambition of getting 20 per cent of the population active by 2030.

I think we owe it to ourselves as an industry to really join together now and push the wellbeing and health agenda forward – and our role within it. I'm here to get my sleeves rolled up and get stuck in.

How does the Membership Council work?

The council now has 14 members from its original nine – reflecting the diversification of the industry – and it's a strong, well-respected group of people. ▶

PHOTO: RICHARD DAWSON

- Each member represents their own sector of the industry, from budget gyms to high-end operators, independents to boutique fitness, trusts to local authority-run centres to wider activity providers. As a council member, you're there as a conduit to communicate what your specific sector is thinking to UK Active, then communicate back from UK Active to your sector.

We're doing everything we can to ensure communication lines remain open in what is now a large and diverse organisation. For example, the UK Active Supplier Council chair attends Membership Council meetings, as do various UK Active team members including CEO Huw Edwards, and I attend the main UK Active board meetings in my capacity as Membership Council chair.

My role in the board meetings is to represent members' views to the board, which now includes non-executive directors from sectors such as healthcare and education. With their broader perspectives and ability to influence government, it's fantastic to have them on the board: we can gain knowledge from them and they can influence what we do. However, they don't work in the sector day-to-day, so I very much see my role as ensuring the board hears UK Active members' voices and doesn't lose sight of what they want as it steers the organisation's strategy and direction.

What's next for our sector?

It comes back to what I said before about the pandemic giving people a powerful, visible demonstration of the value of exercise and living a healthy lifestyle.

When you have someone as influential and respected as the government's Chief Medical Advisor Professor Chris Whitty saying there is no situation, no age and no condition where exercise is not a good thing... well, I think we're three-quarters of the way there. People have had to sit up and listen.

But we must act on this opportunity now, while it's fresh in people's minds. We have to reinforce the importance of exercise and being active and highlight the variety of wonderful ways you can be active in this country.

We need to clearly communicate to those thinking about an active lifestyle, perhaps for the first time, what being active actually looks like – what it is they have to achieve – and how best they go about it.

If in the process we can get another five, maybe 10 per cent of the population to be active on a regular basis every week, that's going to result in significant growth across our entire industry. A rising tide floats all boats.

But operators must be very clear in their messaging so people find their way to a club they're likely to stick with.



Courteen works with the LTA at the Shrewsbury club





PHOTO: RICHARD DAWSON

If you're a budget gym, for example, what you're offering are fantastic facilities at a really affordable price; I'm fully aware that there are people who couldn't afford to join my health and fitness clubs, for example.

Others will be looking for more community, ongoing support and staff engagement, and this is where we're very strong.

The lesson for everybody is to be clear in communicating what it is you do and who you're targeting – not trying to be all things to all people, which to an extent is perhaps what we've all done in the past. Provided we're clear in our messaging, I believe we can be really successful at keeping people engaged with our clubs.

In the past, the press has always been full of 'join a gym in January, leave in March' type stories, but we now have a chance to move on from that. If we keep working hard and making inroads, I genuinely believe we have an opportunity to become credible partners in keeping the nation active and healthy, both physically and mentally. ●

The UK Active Membership Council

The 14 members of UK Active's new Membership Council are as follows, with names listed in alphabetical order:

- **Dave Courteen**, MD, Mosaic Spa and Health Club Group (chair)
- **Andrew Denton**, CEO, Outdoor Industries Association
- **Marc Diaper**, CEO, Gymbox
- **Lisa Dodd-Mayne**, Director of sport and active communities, University of Warwick
- **John Fletcher**, MD, Northampton Leisure Trust
- **Sophie Lawler**, CEO, Total Fitness
- **Lee Matthews**, MD, Fitness First
- **David Monkhouse**, Director, Leisure SK
- **Rebecca Passmore**, UK MD, PureGym
- **Chris Symons**, CEO, BH Live
- **Andrew Thompson**, Chair, Anytime Fitness UK
- **Jean-Claude Vacassin**, Director, The IFBA
- **Sarah Watts**, CEO, Alliance Leisure
- **Dave Wright**, Group CEO, Myzone Group



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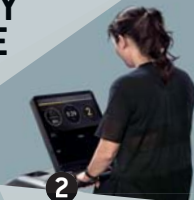
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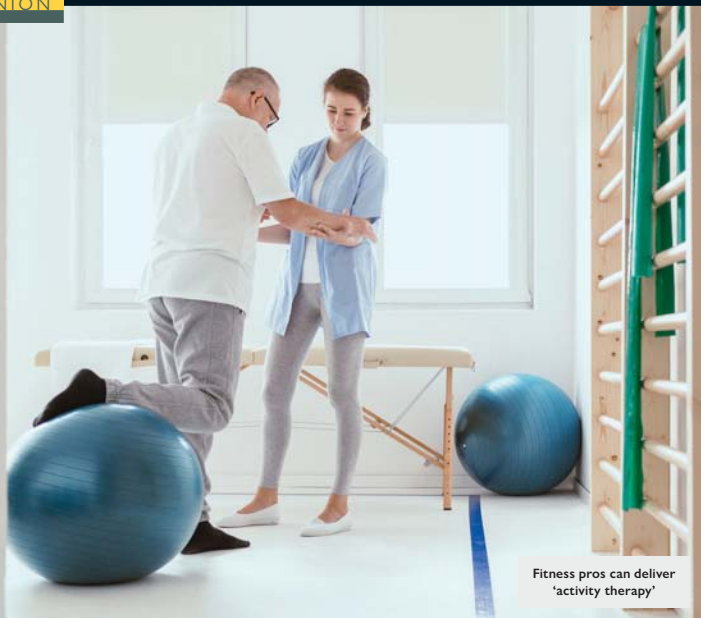
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3

ADAPTIVE POSTURE

30' CARDIO AND STRENGTH WORKOUT



Fitness pros can deliver 'activity therapy'

Everyone's talking about NHS partnerships

In the wake of the pandemic, is the time ripe to change the language around the role of exercise professionals, and gain greater trust from the healthcare sector?

The UK's already stretched National Health Service has been put under unprecedented strain by the global pandemic. Amid the situation with trusts in crisis, ambulance queues, and extended NHS waiting lists,

there's so much our sector could do to support our health service and healthcare professionals.

But how do we make them hear, trust and use us?

Much progress has already been made, and there's an ever-growing body of research that supports

the immense health benefits of physical activity. But is it now time for the health and fitness sector to change its language, and present exercise professionals as what they are – highly-trained activity therapists? Kath Hudson asks our panel of experts.

Muir Gray

Physician

“GPs to prescribe judgement-free fitness classes for women” shouted headlines in *The Times* and the *Guardian* in December

2021, heralding a new therapeutic approach to the handling of common long-term health conditions.

Excellent work is done in NHS rehabilitation – for example, cardiac rehabilitation – but only as part of specialised NHS services. We need to establish a routine of prescribing and dispensing activity in primary care and physical activity professionals have a key role to play in delivering this. Furthermore, we need to get activity therapy funded, just like drug or psychological therapy.

The evidence base for this is very strong, expressed in the reports *Exercise – the Miracle Cure*, from the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges in 2015 (www.hcmmag.com/AMRC), and more recently the reassuring report titled *Benefits Outweigh Risks* from the Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine and Sport England (www.hcmmag.com/benefitsrisk). However, evidence alone is insufficient, we need NHS management and political action to fund exercise professionals to deliver activity therapy.

Language is key to this campaign. As I've previously written in *HCM*, the word 'fitness' is associated with youth and lycra by many. Although it's interesting to note that the terms 'deconditioning' and 'reconditioning' are increasingly being used in healthcare, the NHS itself is using the term wellbeing much more frequently.



We need NHS management and political action to fund exercise professionals to deliver activity therapy

'Health and wellbeing' is a powerful term, which may be politically useful. While we're at it, we must discontinue using the term leisure!

It's important to describe the focus of exercise professionals as physical, cognitive and emotional activity, rather than just physical activity, which undersells the huge psychological benefits of their skills.

They're in the wellbeing business and the intervention should be described as activity therapy distinct from, but closely related to, NHS rehabilitation. We define Activity Therapy as "the promotion and enablement of activity, physical, cognitive and emotional for people with, or at risk of, long-term conditions by people qualified as personal trainers, sports scientists or exercise physiologists".

Then we need to seek funding. There is money available in NHS funding pots for increasing the types of roles in primary care. For example, from the Additional Role Reimbursement Scheme, or the Elective Recovery Fund, but while the NHS funds health and

wellbeing coaches, there is no mention of trainers or physical activity professionals. However, physical activity professionals are excellent coaches and understand wellbeing, so all can apply for funds if they use the correct language. Some have successfully done so.

Furthermore, there's an extra £30m in an Innovative Models of Care scheme announced in the *Social Care White Paper*. We can also use the recent DHSC report *Good for You, Good for Us and Good for Everyone*, which emphasises that at least 10 per cent of prescribing is pointless. One reason for this is because there's currently no option to prescribe 'physical and social activities' dispensed by a physical activity professional. The time is ripe – we need a National Activity Therapy Service delivered locally by our excellently-trained professionals.

Muir Gray is advisor to Public Health England, executive director of the Oxford Centre for Triple Value Healthcare and director of the Optimal Ageing Programme



Gray: 'Language change is needed'



The House of Lords Select Committee is recommending that physical activity and sport fits under DHSC not DCMS

Tara Dillon

CIMSPA

In 2016, CIMSPA facilitated a meeting of all the Royal Colleges and said to them, we have a highly-trained workforce, where would you like us to intervene?

They acknowledged the power of our sector, and the evidence base, but overwhelmingly said they didn't understand our workforce. They wanted us to be more 'like them' in order to give them confidence to refer.

We have since given them this by creating chartered practitioner status for those exercise professionals who have bolted on specialisms to their qualifications – such as stroke rehabilitation, cancer rehab, prehab – to seek chartered practitioner status. We also had to educate the healthcare professionals that this has now happened.

Because physical activity as a preventative measure isn't taught at medical school, Sport England funded an initiative called the Moving Healthcare Professionals Programme, to educate healthcare professionals on the benefits of exercise. CIMSPA is now involved in reviewing this programme to understand its reach and effectiveness. Very soon, we expect to see some decent analysis to show what difference this is making.

Currently the circle doesn't complete: there is a connection which needs to be made at government level. So we need

to work more closely with the Department of Health and Social Care, as well as the new Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, which is saying that an active lifestyle will feature highly in its work.

There has to be actual political will, not just plaudits and promises, but there are signs this is starting to happen. In December, the House of Lords Select Committee for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation published its findings – after a year of scrutiny – recommending that physical activity and sport fits under DHSC not DCMS. It also called for a minister who has a responsibility for health and wellbeing, and a national plan which is legislated to deliver.

So we've created a Chartered Institute, and chartered roles. The education piece is done, what we need now is some political recognition and healthcare professionals to meet us in the middle and acknowledge they can now refer to our sector and prescribe physical activity.

As a sector, we now need to think about how we market our services, so we appear accessible enough to help whole communities, rather than chasing a membership line. We need to look at integrated collaborative initiatives, joining up with Integrated Care Systems, rather than just appealing to those who we can access easily.



PHOTO: CHRISTIAN ANDERSON

Dillon: 'Healthcare pros need to meet us in the middle'

Our sector can
help the shift to a
prevention agenda

Annie Holden

British Association for Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation

The relationship between primary care networks and the health and fitness sector varies around the country. Some counties are already very structured with their funding networks and appreciate the competencies of exercise professionals and how they can support frontline NHS staff, by bringing a whole layer of different qualifications and skill sets.

However, on the whole, the NHS is missing out on a huge opportunity by not leveraging the power of exercise professionals, many of whom are very well qualified, with vocational qualifications and degrees to provide physical activity advice and guidance with behavioural support, as well as more specialist condition-specific knowledge to provide individualised exercise programmes, such as for people with cardiovascular disease.

One of the barriers we're facing is that the concept of using the health and fitness sector is not widely accepted as part of the mindset of the medical community, however, there's a wealth of evidence – including NICE guidance – available to show the effectiveness of exercise in preventing and managing long-term conditions and chronic disease, as well as



research and guidance highlighting the costs of inactivity to the NHS.

Yet there continues to be lost opportunities to consider an active lifestyle as a possible first-line approach, rather than the traditional medicalised approach for all. This may not change significantly until medical training incorporates more information about the benefits and impact of physical activity. Certainly, Sport England and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities are trying to address this through their Moving Healthcare Professionals Programme.

Another issue is, as a workforce, the health and fitness sector isn't always perceived by the

There continue to be lost opportunities to consider an active lifestyle as a first-line approach, rather than the traditional medicalised approach for all

medical sector as having sufficient professional credibility. CIMSPA is working to address this with its Chartered Status. There's also a more recent separate move to develop a new Clinical Exercise Physiologist role. So we need to work hard collectively to raise the profile and credibility of our workforce and show the medical sector how our skilled workforce can support management of their patients.

The sector offers a huge untapped resource of a 50,000-strong workforce which is technically competent and highly skilled, with condition-specific qualifications, who could really help to ease the burden on the NHS.

Knowles: 'We're connecting primary care with leisure centres'

Jane Knowles

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnerships

At the moment there's a language barrier between the healthcare and health and fitness sectors. The healthcare circles often don't understand or don't recognise the level of qualification which health professionals have, and they're not always fully aware of the benefits of physical activity.

In its defence, the primary care network is working way beyond its capacity, so there is no time or energy from that side to form new relationships. If you're a brand new provider who they haven't heard of, then you stand much less chance of working with them.

While exercise professionals might be capable of doing some of the work being carried out by health and wellbeing coaches, many clients would be too intimidated to set foot in a leisure centre.

While leisure centres are certainly an untapped resource for primary care, the image of the industry is still not entirely friendly. To those who have never exercised, health clubs seem to be full of skinny, beautiful people. This cohort needs a lot of handholding and one-to-one guidance to unpick the barriers which have led them to where they are in terms of their physical and mental health.



This cohort needs a lot of handholding and one-to-one guidance to unpick the barriers which have led them to where they are

Campaigns like This Girl Can are helping to change this perception, but it would be helpful for the industry to present more real people in its marketing and social media, and emphasise the benefits of how exercise makes you feel, rather than how it makes you look.

Honest brokers, such as Active Partnerships, can accelerate the relationship between the health and fitness industry and primary care. For example, we're currently working on a programme in Somerset where we've seconded professionals from leisure centres. We're connecting leisure centres and the primary care network and all parties will be

learning together on the programme which is being financed through a community renewal fund looking at employability and economic activity.

We'll be working with people who aren't currently in employment to improve their self esteem and health to get them into a state where they feel fit and able to seek work. The individuals we'll be targeting for this programme may have high BMIs, hypertension, low mood or anxiety or be new parents. As part of this programme, healthcare assistants from surgeries will accompany patients to the leisure centre to meet the exercise professionals and help overcome the intimidation barrier. ●



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Leading with innovation

Yate Leisure is one of the largest sites in Circadian Trust's portfolio, with around 4,000 members. Ben Beasley, director of commercial development, explains why they were an early adopter of Technogym Biocircuit, and how the offer has evolved



Ben Beasley

Yate Leisure has always been ahead of the curve with its fitness offers and in mid-2019 the charitable trust renewed its focus on innovation.

"We were aware of potential competition from boutiques and the budget sector," says Beasley. "Technogym introduced us to Biocircuit and it seemed a fantastic way to dip our toes into the boutique-style market."

Technogym Biocircuit is an adaptive circuit training workout that offers a completely guided programme in 30 minutes, including both connected strength and cardio equipment. It can be positioned as a separate offer, as a bolt-on to existing memberships, or as part of a full membership.

Investing in new and existing members

"One of our values is innovation, and Biocircuit was a way to invest in our members with a new offer they wouldn't have seen anywhere else," explains Beasley.

In fact, Yate Leisure was one of the first Biocircuit installs in the UK and the ideal new solution to meet the needs of all members – from the time-poor and deconditioned, to Exercise on Referral – also serving as an additional profit centre.

Beasley and his team had to decide how they wanted to position Biocircuit. The equipment can be installed in a separate room (ideal for a standalone membership) or within the main gym for greater visibility.

Yate Leisure had a room ideally placed to house Biocircuit, keeping it away from the main fitness offer, so it could be presented it as a bolt-on offer to target new market segments.

Yate Leisure has seen great member interest in Biocircuit

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The whole Biocircuit workout can be completed in just 30 minutes

When it was unveiled in July 2019, Yate Leisure sold it on the basis of being a brand-new concept that offered a complete guided workout in 30 minutes.

"We forecast 10 member upgrades and 10 new sales a month," said Beasley. "We were hoping for 363 users by the end of year two, but we hit 257 after eight months and it broke even well before we forecast."

From profit stream to retention tool

When Yate Leisure had to close due to COVID, Biocircuit had already achieved its ROI, so when the site reopened, the focus switched from new member acquisition to retention, and Beasley changed the way it was offered.

He says: "Biocircuit had paid off its capital cost, so we made it available as part of a standard membership. People want flexibility and many now value space and order in their workouts."

"At that point, Biocircuit moved from being an additional profit centre to adding value to existing customers."

Since reopening, large numbers of members have been inducted onto Biocircuit, showing how valuable

One of our values is innovation, and Biocircuit was a way to invest in our members with a new offer they wouldn't have seen anywhere else

the equipment is in adding interest and value for long-term members.

Streamlining bookings

At Yate Leisure, Biocircuit has its own booking system, but despite demand for equipment, there's rarely a wait. The guided nature of the circuit means someone is finishing their workout every six minutes and users simply log on to the Technogym Unity pedestal and get going. This has become a USP that Yate Leisure uses to communicate the benefits to its busiest members to ensure their engagement. ▶



The guided workout is customised

SPONSORED

"Biocircuit has been an integral part of us revisiting our membership structure and offering members solutions that fit their new attitudes to exercising," says Beasley.

Biocircuit for Exercise on Referral

Now Biocircuit is embedded in the standard member journey, the team is turning its focus to Exercise on Referral customers, as the set-up offers a cost-effective, time-efficient way to deliver one-to-one sessions, with the Biocircuit equipment delivering custom guided workouts, so one instructor can oversee a small group.

"Biocircuit gives us a cost-effective way to deliver Exercise on Referral without losing any of the close attention these members need," explains Beasley. "We plan to block out entire Biocircuit sessions for Exercise on Referral customers so they will always be exercising with others on the same scheme."

The workout makes sense for time-poor members

Biocircuit has been an integral part of us revisiting our membership structure and offering members solutions that fit their new attitudes to exercising

Biocircuit is a cost-effective way to deliver Exercise on Referral



Driving a sense of community

The unique design of Biocircuit means it can be all things to all people, but there's a rationale to programming its use for different demographics. By setting aside areas of the Biocircuit timetable for different user groups, Yate Leisure is creating pockets of community among similar demographics.

"Biocircuit is helping us recover from lockdown," says Beasley. "It has reset our model to offer people variety and flexibility at a time that suits them. Technogym's support has been invaluable in helping us invest in a product mix that meets people's needs. It's great to have an equipment partner that shares our values and views on building a wellness ecosystem that encourages more people to have an active lifestyle."

More: www.technogym.com



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The trend of market consolidation by financial and strategic investors continued despite the influence of the pandemic

ANNUAL REPORT

In April, Deloitte and Europe Active published the ninth edition of their yearly *European Health and Fitness Market Report*, as Karsten Hollasch explains



Similar to the year 2020, the European fitness market was strongly impacted by temporary COVID-19-related club closures and operational restrictions during 2021. As a consequence, many operators tried to overcome this situation through the development of innovative solutions and concepts to enable fitness practitioners to either work out in a safe environment, or in a virtual environment when fitness clubs were closed.

Beyond the health club

Besides market developments and trends, this year's report provides additional insights into the fitness behaviour of European consumers which goes beyond health clubs.

Almost 11,000 consumers from 19 countries were asked about their fitness routines in a representative survey in terms of gender, age and urbanisation. Even if the survey results show that the pandemic had a

negative impact on consumers' fitness behaviour in many European countries (in 14 of the 19 countries, the share of consumers who cut back their fitness routines since the outbreak of the pandemic exceeds the share of consumers who increased their exercise frequency), the consumer sentiment indicates that an increase in physical activity beyond pre-COVID-19 levels might occur once exercise becomes and remains possible in a safe and largely unrestricted setting.

After the sharp decline of fitness market KPIs in 2020, the number of European fitness clubs (63,173) and overall memberships (56.3 million) in 2021 increased slightly by +0.2 per cent and +2.0 per cent, respectively.

A further reduction was prevented mainly through the strong rebound in memberships in the UK and Spain – two of the biggest European markets – as well as through the continued expansion of larger fitness operators compensating for pandemic-related club closures.



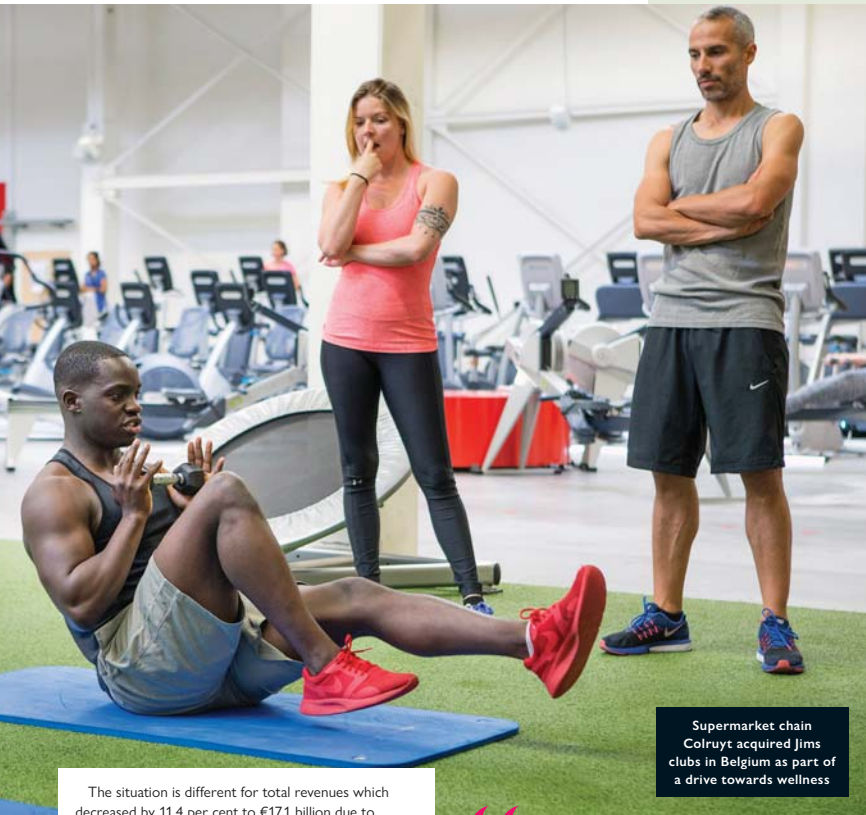


PHOTO: YANN BERTHAUD/CO.BI/UT GROUP

Supermarket chain
Colruyt acquired Jims
clubs in Belgium as part of
a drive towards wellness

The situation is different for total revenues which decreased by 11.4 per cent to €17.1 billion due to the pandemic. Similar to the previous year, gyms in many European countries had to close for several months so that from an accounting perspective, no revenues could be realised during these periods.

Regional variations

However, contrary to what these overall values suggest, the 'European fitness market' does not exist, but is the aggregation of various, often highly heterogeneous markets which are not moving in a uniform direction. The two largest European fitness markets, Germany and the UK, stand representative of this.

As fitness club operations in Germany were subject to comparatively strict, pandemic-related measures (including club closures for almost half of the year) in 2021, revenues dropped by 46.4 per cent to €2.23 billion whereas gym operators in the UK



*Signs from the market
are very encouraging.
Basic-Fit increased
membership by 18 per
cent in the first quarter
of 2022, compared to the
end of the previous year*



Deloitte found
new entrants
driving change
in the market

PHOTO: VAN BERTHOUCKE/ELITE

benefited from comparatively early club re-openings, combined with the lifting of restrictions and hence, experienced a strong membership rebound, resulting in a revenue increase of 34.4 per cent to €3.56 billion. This means that last year's revenue development in these two countries – when total revenues in the UK (-51.9 per cent) dropped by a larger share than in Germany (-24.5 per cent) – has been reversed.

Despite the overall revenue decrease in the European market, the Top-15 operators were able to increase their revenues (+1.8 per cent) to a cumulated value of €3.1 billion in 2021. Especially leading fitness chains from the UK, such as David Lloyd Leisure (+56 per cent, including government payments), PureGym



*The largest transaction
took place at the
beginning of the year,
when Svenska N'ergy
acquired 94 gyms
from Swedish fitness
franchise company
Puls and Träning*



(+21 per cent – Deloitte estimate based on companies' Q3 2021 revenues), GLL (+11 per cent) and The Gym Group (+39 per cent) regained momentum.

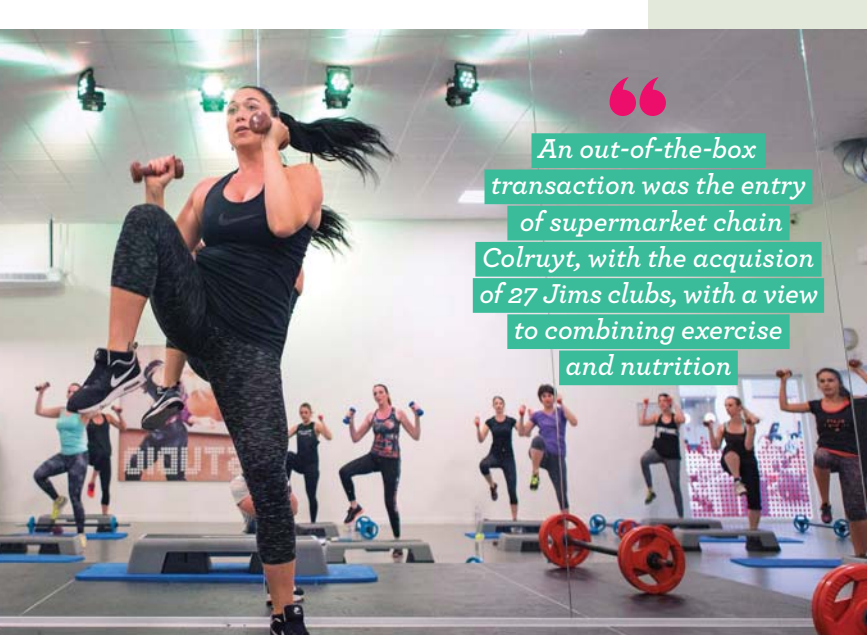
Also, in terms of membership, the leading European operators were able to outperform the market. The above-average membership growth of the top operators is strongly related to new club openings. The most aggressive expansion strategy is pursued by Basic-Fit which opened 110 new gyms in 2021 and plans to enter the German market in 2022.

Mergers and acquisitions

With 19 M&A deals in which a minimum of four gyms, as well as at least 50 per cent of the target's shares, were acquired, the number of European brick-and-mortar M&A transactions in 2021 has settled at a constantly high level. The figures show that the trend of market consolidation by financial and strategic investors (ie other fitness club operators) continued despite the influence of the pandemic.

The largest transaction by number of clubs already took place at the beginning of the year when Svenska N'ergy AB, which operates fitness clubs under the STC brand, acquired 94 gyms from the Swedish franchise fitness company, Puls and Träning.

Also, the Spanish concession operator Forus continued its growth with the acquisition of 10



“
An out-of-the-box
transaction was the entry
of supermarket chain
Colruyt, with the acquisition
of 27 Jims clubs, with a view
to combining exercise
and nutrition

Spanish Holmes Place clubs and 18 sport facilities in Italy. The expansion was enabled by an investment from finance houses JP Morgan Asset Management and Ben Oldman Partners earlier in the year.

In Poland, fitness intermediary Medcover acquired 45 gyms in the course of four different transactions. Similar to its Polish competitor Benefit Systems, Medcover pursues a strategy of vertical integration by owning a network of different fitness operators.

An interesting out-of-the-box transaction was the arrival of Colruyt (a Belgian supermarket chain) which entered the health and fitness market with the acquisition of 27 Belgian clubs of Jims Fitness. Through the acquisition, Colruyt wants to combine nutrition and exercise competence for a powerful consumer experience.

Fitness behaviour

Although it's difficult to predict how quickly the European fitness industry will be back to its pre-pandemic level, signs from the market in 2022 – with no or only a few limitations for gym operations – are very encouraging. As one example, Basic-Fit increased memberships by 18 per cent in the first quarter of 2022, compared to the end of the previous year.

The relatively fast return to fitness clubs not only underlines their advantages of professional equipment and social interaction, but also indicates



that gyms will stay as centrepieces of the fitness ecosystem. Nevertheless, smaller operators will need more time to fully recover from the pandemic.

At the same time, new fitness solutions have been established to support fitness practitioners during their workouts outside the fitness club, most of them focusing on digitally enhanced or at-home fitness. Those new offerings enriched the variety of opportunities of which a consumer can choose to build their own fitness experience – based on individual preferences. ●

AUTOMATICITY

Creating exercise habits that stick

Bryce Hastings, head of research at Les Mills, explains the latest research into exercise motivation, giving tips on how to engage hard-to-reach members

I'm generally not a jealous person, but as someone involved with health and exercise research, I must admit to being somewhat envious of the dental profession. How did

dentists manage to convince the vast majority of us to brush our teeth twice a day without even thinking about it? Imagine if we could do that with movement and exercise?

This habitual approach to dental hygiene and other such routines is known as automaticity – something we do automatically without thinking about it or going through a conscious decision-making process – it just seems to happen.

Activities with high levels of automaticity happen even when we face obstacles, so just imagine if we could all approach exercise in the same way.

The pandemic has prompted consumers to reprioritise their health, with 50 per cent of people now focusing more on their wellbeing,



Bryce Hastings

according to the recent *Global Fitness Report* (www.lesmills.com/global-fitness-report).

And with the latest Google data showing search-indicated demand for gym memberships is at sustained

all-time-highs, there's significant growth potential for operators as COVID restrictions recede and clubs return to full capacity.

But creating an exercise habit that sticks remains a challenge – one the industry has yet to truly crack. The stats remind us that a vast number of new exercisers fail to establish a long-term fitness habit.

As someone who has the same mentality towards exercise as brushing my teeth, I've long been fascinated by the prospect of cracking the





Lack of motivation, time, and facilities were seen as bigger barriers to exercise by inactive people than active people



Clubs need to practice positive reinforcement to motivate members

PHOTO: LES MILLS

code to this mystery. What is it that enables my exercise behaviour to stick and become automatic, while others disengage and stop exercising?

About the study

To explore this, Dr Jinger Gottschall, adjunct associate professor at the University of Colorado, and I set out to investigate the differences in attitudes between a group of habitual exercisers who had been regularly active for at least 10 years, and a group who had been mostly inactive for the same period. The two groups were age- and gender-matched, so we could draw comparisons.

Unsurprisingly, we found 100 per cent of the active group strongly agreed that exercise is an automatic aspect of their lives, whereas 92 per cent of inactive people disagreed.

To determine why this might be, we examined their perceptions of exercise. In the active group, 92 per cent said they always experience positive feelings from exercise (such as enjoyment, feeling energised and accomplished), compared to just 23 per cent of the inactive group.

That was a surprise – I would have anticipated that even if you don't exercise regularly, the times you do exercise would instill a sense of positivity, but apparently that's not always the case.

The study also found the active group were more motivated by the physical, mental, and self-esteem benefits brought by exercise, compared to the inactive group.

However, the biggest difference was in perceptions of the social benefits – 84 per cent of the active group were motivated by the social ▶

aspects of exercise (exercise as a source of entertainment, fun, and means of seeing friends), versus just 48 per cent of the inactive group.

How about attitudes to exercise intensity? 77 per cent of the active group preferred incorporating challenges into their exercise (such as pushing through exhaustion, muscle soreness, and upping the intensity), while 70 per cent of the inactive group said they didn't enjoy challenges.

The active group were also more likely to track their exercise and set goals, but the most notable differences were how the active group focused on the health benefits of exercise (82 per cent vs 45 per cent of the inactive group); scheduled specific times for exercise (77 per cent vs 36 per cent); and planned ways to ensure they exercise regardless of conditions (84 per cent vs 38 per cent). ▶

PHOTO: LES MILLS

The active group were focused on the health benefits of exercise



Driving through change

So what can we in the industry do to break down barriers and help people establish exercise habits that stick?

1 Keep it positive

Don't assume that just because someone has turned up, they'll leave feeling positive about their exercise experience. You may need to emphasise and reiterate the progress they're making.

2 Provide Social Support

People generally do better in groups – feeling as though someone else is in the same boat is hugely reassuring.

3 Leave the challenges for later

Focus on frequency and regular attendance before intensity.

4 Enjoyment is a much better motivator than physical results

Shift the priority from the most effective option, to what they'll want to come back and do again.

5 Keep confidence levels high

Breaking a habit into small, achievable chunks with an intensity level people feel they can cope with is key to maintaining a sense of confidence.



Providing an exercise environment they enjoy might be what tips someone from feeling they should exercise, to feeling they want to

51 per cent of the inactive group cited lack of social support



PHOTO LES MILLS

Barriers to exercise

Lack of motivation, time, and facilities were all seen as bigger barriers to exercise by the inactive group than the active group. But the clearest contrasts were lack of social support (reported by 51 per cent of the inactive group, versus just 8 per cent of the active group); lack of interest in exercising (66 per cent vs 15 per cent); and feeling self-conscious (49 per cent vs 8 per cent).

In my role as Les Mills head of research, I've spent many hours creating workshops so our group fitness instructors can take full advantage of these learnings, however, these insights transcend the group exercise

environment. Our job is to take someone who is unsure about visiting a health club, who probably turned up because they feel they have to exercise and reassure them, converting them into someone who *wants* to exercise.

Focusing on social elements and providing an exercise environment they enjoy may be what tips someone from feeling they should exercise, to feeling they want to.

For those of us already happily in the teeth-brushing category of exercise adherence, helping others to find the fun in fitness holds the key to inspiring even more positivity. ●

More: www.hcmmag.com/automaticity



*As health and fitness providers
we have a responsibility to
support people's wellbeing*

Get real

Social media influencers cause harm by raising unrealistic expectations of physical perfection, as Andrea Dearden explains

David Lloyd Clubs has launched a new pledge. What's the purpose of it?

Our Wellness Pledge highlights how we as a brand are committed to encouraging the nation to focus on their wellness and feeling happy and healthy in their bodies, rather than just trying to lose weight. It also calls on the fitness industry to join us in advertising responsibly, avoid encouraging quick-fix solutions to weight loss and promote long-term healthy habits. We believe it's an industry first.

What inspired this move?

Our Wellness Pledge was created following research we commissioned that showed 64 per cent of people admit they never see success from diet and fitness fads that promote a weight loss quick fix, with the average individual trying 17 new diets and spending £3,290 on health and fitness products, only to see them fail.

Our pledge, therefore, encourages the nation to say no to these fitness fads, and instead focus on making healthy choices that fit into their lifestyle so they're happier and healthier in the longer term.

What outcomes are you seeking?

As an industry we know quick fixes not only don't work, but can also damage people's mental well as physical wellbeing, so we want to see more fitness brands behave responsibly and stop selling products that promise short-term results, but have limited long-term success.

As health and fitness providers we have a responsibility to support people's wellbeing and should regulate ourselves to ensure that we all operate to the highest standards.

Tell us about the study that was done to evidence the need for this initiative

We conducted research in conjunction with 4Media, where a representative sample of 2,000 UK adults was



Andrea Dearden



David Lloyd
has launched a
Wellness Pledge
to guide policy

PHOTO: JACQUES AND DAVID LLOYD LESTER

asked a series of questions around their experiences with fitness quick fixes and weight loss marketing.

What were the other key findings?

The desire to lose weight has led to 41 per cent of the nation turning to diet and fitness fads. The most common diets tried were meal replacement shakes (18 per cent) and the 5-2 Diet (16 per cent). Fitness-specific options included the Abs Toning Belt, Ab Roller and Waist Trainer. These were shown to be anything but helpful, however, with success seen less than a third (31 per cent) of the time, leaving Brits feeling disappointed (42 per cent) and frustrated (31 per cent).

How are you feeding this insight back into your operations?

The insights gained from this research helped us to create the pledge, which in turn has been rolled out

across the company. Some of the key actions we've undertaken include not working with influencers who promote rapid weight loss diets, not promoting unrealistic body standards in any of our advertising and marketing materials – or digitally enhancing any images to alter body shape – and not promoting our clubs as a short-term, rapid weight loss solution.

In clubs we've also trained all our fitness teams to coach members in developing long-term healthy habits, to empower them to be mentally and physically healthy. We're also continuing to provide a wide range of activities and classes that feel inclusive and encourage people of all ages and fitness levels to be active.

Where do you stand more generally on the use of influencers?

Our research showed almost half of Brits feel that the use of celebrities or social media



- influencers to promote weight loss products is false advertising, as they don't use the products themselves, while a further two-fifths agree that they promote unachievable goals to the public.

As a result, we've taken the stance within our Wellness Pledge to not work with any influencers who promote rapid weight loss diets, or any other unhealthy or potentially dangerous fitness quick fixes.

Why did you choose to work with Nadia Sawalha?

Nadia's beliefs perfectly align with ours, in that fads often don't work and can cause more harm than good. She also openly discusses the importance of healthy and sustainable fitness goals through her own personal journey, something which we champion. For these reasons we felt she was the ideal individual to work with on the launch of our campaign and Wellness Pledge.

What role does Holli Rubin play?

Holli Rubin is a psychotherapist, body image specialist and mental health practitioner. We worked with her on our campaign to get her expert input on why diet and fitness quick fixes can be dangerous and damaging, and why we should move towards a more moderate and balanced approach when thinking about the importance of exercise in everyday life.

She supported our research and Wellness Pledge and was able to share and discuss her experiences as an expert in body image (more: www.hollirubin.com).



You're calling on the industry to advertise responsibly. What bad practice have you observed, and what harm does this do?

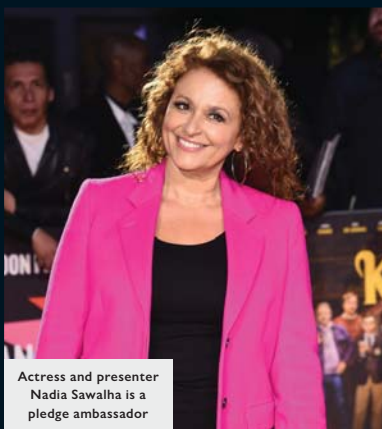
Every January we're deluged with quick-fix promises, with minimal regulation on standards and it falls to the larger operators and brands to take a stand.

It's clear from our research that diet and fitness fads, and quick-fix weight loss products, have a damaging effect on both physical and mental health, with people left feeling frustrated, and unmotivated when these fads fail – as a result some even consider surgery to get the results they are looking for.

We want to encourage the nation to focus on being healthy and happy in a way that's sustainable for life, and hope to inspire others in the industry to join us in supporting the nation to make these long-term changes.

If people want to join health and fitness clubs in order to lose weight, what is your advice to them?

We want to be clear that there is of course nothing wrong with wanting to lose weight, and in fact, the pandemic has highlighted to many of us the importance of maintaining a healthy weight, which has been a driver for more people to join health clubs. What we believe is wrong, and what we're taking a stand against,



Actress and presenter
Nadia Sawalha is a
pledge ambassador



PHOTO: DAVID LYONS/LEAPARE

is quick fix, unhealthy and unproven ways to do it, as this can be dangerous to mental and physical health.

The most effective and safe way to lose weight is to make long-term sustainable changes to diet and lifestyle. We encourage people to take the advice of a personal trainer who can work with them to achieve their goals safely and without unhealthy pressure.

How can we encourage people to look after their health every day, and avoid things such as the post-Christmas diet crisis?

We know that there's increased pressure post-Christmas to lose weight fast, something which is often exacerbated by health and fitness marketing at this time.

We'd encourage people to find an exercise and nutritional programme that they enjoy and works for them and take it slowly. They should try and avoid feeling pressured and instead focus on making healthy and sustainable choices that fit into their lifestyle, so they're happier and healthier in the long term. ●



*We want to
encourage the nation
to focus on being
healthy and happy
in a way that's
sustainable for life*

Celebrating 300 editions

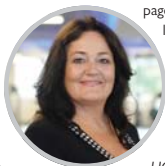
As *HCM* passed its 300th edition milestone, readers shared their thoughts and feelings on *HCM's* contribution to the industry in a very special postbag

HCM has helped to amplify our contribution to the inactivity, levelling up and sustainability agendas

Sarah Watts
Alliance Leisure

HCM – or *Health Club Management* magazine as it was in days gone by – has been my trusted news source for as long as I can remember. I, along with many members of the Alliance Leisure team, have also been a regular contributor to independent editorial pieces and also an investor in marketing with *HCM*.

The publication has built a large, loyal international readership, so we know that by appearing in its



pages we're reaching a larger audience than we could reach on our own, and this has helped to amplify our contribution to the inactivity, levelling up and sustainability agendas.

HCM continues to serve the sector, providing a vital source of impartial news, while creating a platform from which to discuss, debate and share vital information. Hats off to Liz Terry, Jan Williams and the team. Recent years have been testing for us all, but *HCM's* editorial quality has never wavered.

HCM is a great source of news, innovation, expertise and thought leadership

Matthew Pengelly
Matrix Fitness UK

HCM in all its formats – digital and print – has always provided a fantastic overview of what's happening in the industry, at home and abroad. The print magazine has also long been a regular staple on our office coffee table and is a great source



of news for all the latest innovations, expertise, news and features.

We have a long-standing relationship with *HCM*, and over the past few years, the team have helped us raise our company profile, through what has been a difficult time for all. We celebrate this 300th issue and look forward to the next 300!

Abigail Harris
Big Fish PR

Where would the industry be without *HCM*? In my 24 years working in communications for the fitness sector, it's remained everyone's first port of call for up-to-date news, comment and analysis. For our clients, it's the place to be seen; a vital tool for sharing their news, as well as staying abreast of changes, innovations and developments. Whether UK-based or worldwide, *HCM* is the go-to fitness industry publication.



“Whether UK-based or worldwide, *HCM* is the go-to fitness industry publication”



HCM campaigned on behalf of the sector during the pandemic lockdowns

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/JACOB LUND



HCM help us make decisions based on the most up-to-date information

Emma Excell
Fisikal

HCM continues to provide a premium news service for all those working in and interested in the leisure sector. The monthly print edition remains the coffee table magazine of choice, crammed full of best practice examples, innovations, research and insights, while the digital news feed and ezines deliver news as it breaks, helping us and others to make decisions based on the most up-to-date information. In the last few years, the marketing team has helped us to elevate our brand to a level of visibility that's now driving talks with global partners.



It's great to work with a media partner who shares the same values and ambitions

Ernst de Neef
Funxion International

Funxion serves a global market, but has a head office in the Netherlands, so it's absolutely vital that we work with partners to help us deliver our messages, news of product launches, as well as insight and innovations beyond our local environment. HCM, along with its sister title, *Fit Tech*, provides us with the perfect platform. It has a global audience and its association with many of the



key international industry shows and exhibitions means that, through a connection with the title, we're able to influence audiences we would otherwise find difficult to reach. Funxion is focused on helping businesses succeed with high-quality fitness content. It's great to work with a media partner who shares the same values and ambitions! Congratulations to Liz Terry and the team on reaching the 300th issue. We're looking forward to working together with you on many more.



I've personally observed this aspiring publication turn into a fully matured, high-end magazine

Daniel Jones
Orbit4

HCM is a wonderful and professional magazine that represents our exciting industry really well. Over many years, I've observed this aspiring publication turn into a fully-matured, high-end magazine for the fitness industry. The high-level imagery and stories have motivated me as a reader, and as a business owner, to invest in marketing Orbit4 and our sister brands with HCM. It's great to be seen alongside other industry-leading brands.





HCM helps us to reach and engage with key stakeholders within the industry

Chris Johnson
Pulse Fitness

Congratulations to HCM on its 300th edition of the magazine. We're honoured to have been included as regular contributors to the publication over the years, helping us to reach and engage with key stakeholders within the industry.

HCM's extensive network and audience reach have allowed us to showcase our work to current customers while connecting with a potential new customer base. The wide-ranging features and regular editorial slots have allowed us to share a variety of news; from recent additions to our equipment range, and the development of our connected ecosystem Trakk, to company profile slots, spotlighting our key team members and positioning both these figures and Pulse as industry leaders.

We're particularly proud of our regular newsletter PulseBeat, published in HCM, that has allowed us to showcase our projects and expertise in depth. We thank HCM for their continued support and look forward to working with the team on the next 300 editions of the magazine!

The integrity of the team and the quality of the writing are second-to-none

Dan Rees
Premier Global NASM

I've been reliant on HCM to keep me up to date with industry news for as long as I can remember. The integrity of the team and the quality of the writing are second-to-none, and are just a couple of reasons why I continue to rate HCM as a go-to news channel of choice.

As a training provider celebrating our 30th year in the fitness sector,



we value HCM as an effective means of keeping the wider sector up to date with our news, product launches and industry insights, helping us to amplify what we do so that we can reach and support more learners and aspiring fitness professionals.

The last few years have been testing for all of us, but HCM continued to deliver a vital service throughout. Well done, all. Here's to the next 300 must-read issues!



Without HCM, we'd struggle to discover a platform that so effectively highlights exercise referral and physical activity

Stuart Stokes
Refer All

Refer All works closely with national bodies, leisure providers, and local authorities who deliver health-related programmes.

Our industry news and updates come from HCM's timely articles, which keep us up to date on both the national and local fronts. We've been delighted to be featured in HCM many times and without it, we'd struggle to discover a platform that so effectively highlights exercise referral and physical activity direction in the sector.

HCM plays a very important role within the fitness sector

David Langridge
1FitLife

Congratulations from all the team at 1FitLife. HCM plays a very important role within the fitness sector and has supported our company over the past five years, creating fitness and wellness content. Thank you for your continued support and well done for hitting the 300th edition milestone!





HCM works in partnership with operators, suppliers, events and industry associations



HCM is my go-to publication when it comes to keeping up with the sector

David Monkhouse
Leisure-net and active-net

HCM is a great supporter of the research insight we generate and the event we run. It's my go-to publication when it comes to keeping up with the sector and assists me in maintaining my network, enhancing my knowledge and benchmarking (stealing!) ideas.

HCM informs and guides the sector. It was invaluable through lockdown, and was the focus of a number of excellent campaigns to support the sector in difficult times. Thank you to the HCM team.

HCM has always represented our sector with clarity and professionalism

Miles Rimell
Precor

The health and fitness industry is one of change and innovation, built on strong relationships and partnerships, and for the last 20 years or so, we at Precor have enjoyed the support of the entire team at HCM; though a special mention has to be made for Liz Terry, for her thoughtful guidance both in the HCM publications and in personal, quiet asides.



During this time, Precor developments have included new products, ranges and solutions aimed at providing an even better experience for clubs and members. Now part of Peloton Commercial, we're looking forward to the future with optimism.

HCM has always represented our sector with professionalism and clarity, offering invaluable insight on a daily basis, and we're proud to have been on this journey with you.



TRIPLE THE POWER OF MEMBER RETENTION.

Enhance member engagement, experience and retention with **TRAKK**, the connected ecosystem from Pulse Fitness.

- Trainers can easily connect with clients to set goals, create workouts and monitor their fitness journey.
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- Allow members to follow ready-made workouts, log gym sessions and track their progress all through the iOS and Android app.



Find out more about how your members can benefit from **TRAKK** by booking your demo today.

pulsefitness.com/TRAKK





TRUSTED PARTNER

Pulse Fitness and Bolsover District Council have been collaborating for many years to deliver dedicated community activity spaces

The team at Bolsover District Council's Go! Active leisure facility began working with Pulse Fitness in 2016, as part of an ongoing five-year renewal partnership.

Over the last six years, the community-focused centre has received two full-scale renovations to provide local residents with a dedicated space for sports and leisure.

Designing the fitness suite

The council selected Pulse as a forward-thinking partner who could achieve its vision of creating a local authority facility with a private-club feel and delivering engaging facilities with a focus on the local community.

Pulse was able to deliver this and much more. In January 2017, the centre was re-opened with a brand new 100-station gym featuring Pulse Fitness' market-leading equipment, a 25m swimming pool, a new thermal

suite complete with steamroom, sauna, ice fountain and rain shower, changing facilities and café.

A trusted supplier

As a result of Pulse's attention to detail, high-quality production and overall delivery of the initial project, Bolsover District Council called on the company again in 2021 to oversee a £500k overhaul, to bring the centre's facilities up to date.

In response to customer feedback, the end-of-year makeover saw the centre receive updates to both the interiors and the leisure facilities. New and advanced gym equipment was installed from Pulse Fitness's top-of-the-range Premium Cardio and Strength lines, including: Curve Treadmills, Stepmills and Air Bikes, among other items. New flooring throughout, and extensions to the free weights area and functional training area completed the project.

The newly-renovated centre offers over 100 group exercise classes a week, alongside new activities in the shape of boxing bags and a Stairmaster machine.

In addition to the new and improved interiors and facilities, the

We're delighted to showcase what can be achieved within a strong working partnership such the one we have with Go! Active

Chris Johnson, MD, Pulse Fitness

latest renovation also introduced Go! Active customers to Trakk, the fitness content platform and tracking app from Pulse. Now members can create their own workout plan and tap into readymade training plans.

Trakk also allows members to engage with PTs, so trainers can set personalised plans and programmes for their clients, identify at-risk members and share automated messages with the member base.

"We're delighted to showcase what can be achieved within a strong working partnership," says Chris Johnson, MD of Pulse Fitness. "Over the last six years, Go! Active has gone from strength to strength, continuously reaching financial targets. The latest renovation has accelerated success combined with the introduction of Trakk to help members progress".

● www.pulsefitness.com



The Pulse Trakk app has been implemented

SAFE & ESSENTIAL



The pandemic brought about our sector's biggest ever collaboration on COVID safety data. Lizzie Broughton tells the story

This month, UK Active published its full report on COVID-19 safety data from the health and fitness sector in the UK, representing data gathered in relation to 240 million visits, making it the biggest data set in Europe.

UK Active's safety data reporting was launched nearly two years ago, when the UK was in the middle of its first national lockdown. As the trade body for the sector, UK Active has always championed the importance of having easily accessible physical facilities for exercise for all.

In the first stages of the pandemic, early indications from Sport England's consumer polling – with Savanta ComRes – suggested that while activity levels overall were staying constant over the lockdown, there were gaps in activity levels opening up between certain demographic groups – effectively, inequalities were growing.

As we moved towards the initial reopening of facilities in July 2020 we were confident that Fit Together, the safety frameworks and operating procedures created by UK Active in partnership with operator members, would keep consumers safe when facilities reopened, ensuring more people could remain active and healthy and in turn, improve our nation's resilience against the virus.

Gyms, leisure centres and fitness facilities all put in a huge amount of work to ensure their facilities met the new standards required. As the reopening of facilities approached on 25 July (in England), UK Active recognised the growing need to demonstrate as a sector the safety of our collective facilities. Amid a landscape of uncertainty and ever-changing restrictions over the next two years, weekly data reporting became a mainstay of the UK Active Research Institute's work, and our evidence underpinned our public campaigning and lobbying efforts with the simple message that health and fitness facilities were 'safe and essential'.

Proving health clubs are low-risk

At a time when the spotlight fell across all sectors in determining what restrictions were necessary to reduce the spread of the virus, we looked to develop a reporting mechanism that would enable us to gather on behalf of the sector the data that was needed to demonstrate that gyms and leisure centres were low-risk spaces.

There were some key factors to consider. Firstly, the ease and simplicity of both our data collection and processing. At a time where operators were already under huge



We adapted the methodology to understand the volume of group exercise class attendees to mitigate fears that classes presented a higher risk environment

Research was able to prove that group exercise classes were safe

pressures due to the additional complications of operating under COVID-19 restrictions, the data we were requesting needed to be quick and simple for them to gather, and not add an extra administrative burden.

Likewise, for the team at the UK Active Research Institute to be able to produce collated weekly stats quickly and efficiently – so we always had the most up-to-date information possible – we needed a methodology that would enable us to easily convert raw data from about 2,000 sites into a set of consistent metrics each week that could be aggregated.

We determined that the key metrics we would gather from each operator each week would be: total visits, confirmed COVID-19 cases from users and staff, and Environmental Health

Officer visits across different regions. Using these, we produced a data template which was circulated to the entire UK Active membership. From the initial weekend of reopening in England (24–25 July 2020), the response was incredibly positive, with operators proactively submitting their data on time across all nations. As the weeks progressed, the operation became more streamlined, with the Research Institute adding additional processes in place to automate the procedure as much as possible.

The collated data was shared on a weekly basis with UK Active members for their own internal purposes, but was also used on a much wider basis by UK Active and its members to demonstrate on an ongoing basis the low risk within facilities. ►



This model is a great example of the sector unifying through data to influence positive change, both publicly and politically

Week-on-week comparisons

Data was analysed as a COVID-19 case rate per 100,000 visits to enable easy week-on-week comparison. This was presented against the UK overall case rate per 100,000 population for the same time, not for direct comparison, but to see if the trends being seen nationwide were reflected in the data we were collecting.

We were able to use the data with each of the home nation governments to provide the reassurance that the mitigations that were in place within facilities were working.


Through regular public statements showing the latest stats, we were able to demonstrate that even against a backdrop of rising cases within the general population, COVID-19 case rates remained extremely low throughout. The peak week saw 2,042 sites submit data. The highest weekly reported visits figure reached 5.4 million. Across the two years, the COVID-19 case rate per 100,000 visits was 1.080. Over the course of the whole project, we collected data on more than 240 million visits to facilities.

The speed of data collection and the ongoing dialogue we had with members also enabled us to adapt the methodology to respond to any new requirements. This included asking for additional information on geographical areas classified as high risk, understanding the



UK Active reporting July 2020 - February 2022

	25 July 20 - 27 Dec 20	12 Apr 21 - 18 July 21	19 July 21 - 27 Feb 22	Total
Number of user visits	75,007,464	61,432,759	104,714,754	241,154,977
User COVID-19 cases	1,277	517	811	2,605
User COVID-19 cases per 100,000 visits	1.702	0.842	0.774	1.080



Operators committed to delivering on COVID-safe operating procedures

volume of group exercise class attendees to mitigate fears that these classes presented a higher risk environment, and looking at the quantity of staff required to self-isolate and the impact this was having on business operations.

The speed at which we were able to gather this extra data meant we could respond to new concerns or risks as soon as they emerged, with high-quality evidence from a sector-wide data set available always within a week.

In early 2022, as it became apparent that nearly all COVID-19 restrictions would soon be lifted, the data reporting exercise drew to a natural conclusion. With the threat of closure that had been present over the last two years removed, and the end of mandatory self-isolation, there was no longer a pressing need for weekly data. Coupled with the removal of free lateral flow testing, which would be likely to compromise the accuracy of the data, the final week of reporting took place in February 2022.

By this point the project had served its purpose and fulfilled the original mission – to support the sector by demonstrating the

safety of facilities and the effectiveness of the operating procedures that were in place.

None of this would have been possible without the ongoing support of our members, who were unwavering in their commitment to supplying their data to us, week in, week out. This level of collaboration and commitment from the sector enabled us to produce high-quality evidence which was far greater than the sum of its parts.

Having seen the power of this collaboration over the course of the pandemic, the next step now is to build on this and maintain the momentum generated. This model is a great example of the sector unifying through data to influence positive change both publicly and politically. We must continue to work together, fostering an open approach to data sharing in order to generate the insight required to continue to support, protect, inform and help the sector to grow. ●

Lizzie Broughton is strategic lead for insight at UK Active. Download *Safe and Essential* at www.HCMmag.com/SafeEssential

BOSTON STRONG

The Global Wellness Summit brought together public health and wellness experts in Boston recently. Jane Kitchen was there for HCM to see first-hand what this 'New new era in health and wellness' will look like for the sector



Let's get this out of the way first: this Summit was not the international gathering of wellness minds from across the globe of pre-COVID days, when we used to jump on a transatlantic flight without a thought in our mind or a lateral flow test result in our hand. But it was, all things considered, a step in that direction.

The Summit's theme, 'A new new era in health and wellness', was showcased with an impressive roster of speakers, as organisers took advantage of Boston's reputation as a hub of academic and medical research to bring in an exceptional lineup.

Some of the top medical advisors from around the US were in attendance, including Summit co-host Dr Michael Roizen of the Cleveland Clinic; Dr Richard Carmona, 17th surgeon general of the US; and Dr Michelle Williams, dean of the faculty at Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health.

The agenda kept up with the times; several panels and speakers focused on women's health and communities of colour and in this age of anxiety, new research on sleep health, breathwork, and the power of psychedelics for mental wellness were presented.

As would be expected, many of the speakers and panellists focused on how COVID has impacted our wellness – mental, physical and economic.

As it's done since 2015, when the name of the Summit changed from the Global Spa & Wellness Summit to the Global Wellness Summit, this year's programme took one small step further away from spa, to focus more on topics such as technology (set to be a big subject at the next Summit in Tel Aviv), wellness architecture and real estate, and bridging the gap between medicine and wellness.

Personal and planetary wellness

After the traditional opening of beautiful cinematography from filmmaker and mushroom-lover Louie Schwartzberg and a welcome from GWS CEO Susie Ellis, co-host, Cleveland Clinic's Dr Michael Roizen, author of *Real Age*, opened the Summit with a bombshell: between 2020 and 2030, we'll see an exponential increase in life expectancy of at least 30 years and by 2030, 90 will be the new 40, he said.

"We've extended life expectancy by two-and-a-half years every decade since 1890, when life expectancy was 40; now, it's 78 or 79," he explained. "Up to now, we've delayed ageing; now we're going to be able to reverse it."

Dr Roizen talked about the importance of lifestyle – exercise, nutrition and stress management – in making sure that if we're living longer, we're living longer 'well'.

CEO Susie Ellis opened the conference with a passionate address



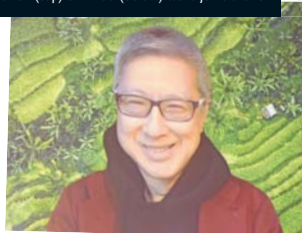
He explained that physical activity affects which genes are on or off, stress management controls whether markers for inflammation are turned on, and we should “only eat food we love and that loves us back”.

“You are a genetic engineer for you,” he explained. “You, by simple lifestyle actions, can change whether genes that promote cancer are on or off.”

Co-host, tech billionaire, Victor Koo, who attended via video link from China, reminded us that human health, planetary health and animal welfare are all interconnected, that “there’s no true personal wellness without global wellness when it comes to pandemics” and that the density of factory farms increases the risk of more disease spreading. Importantly, he said, we’re facing the greatest threat to mental wellness since World War II.



Roizen (top) and Koo (below) were joint chairs



- ▶ "Humanity has looked for more and for better – with no end in sight," he said. "But more countries are now realising that true wellbeing of citizens is a better way to measure success."

Psychedelics, music and mental wellness

Schwartzberg also focused on the link between planetary and personal health. "What's the benefit of living to 90 or 100 if we don't have a planet that can sustain life?" he asked.

He is well-known to the GWS audience, who have delighted in his time-lapse footage of the natural world. Earlier in the pandemic, his film *Fantastic Fungi* was picked up by Netflix, inspiring viewers across the globe, and causing *The Los Angeles Times* to declare "mushrooms are the new superheroes."

"Coming out of the pandemic, the most difficult thing to deal with was disconnection," said Schwartzberg. "Mushrooms are an underground network, and the timing of that message couldn't be better."

We're in a kind of mushroom zeitgeist culturally; they're everywhere – skincare, coffee – mushrooms are a portal into understanding nature and how we need to live in harmony with the planet."

But beyond that, Schwartzberg's film – and his talk at the GWS – focused on the power of psychedelic mushrooms in helping people overcome PTSD.



More countries are realising that true wellbeing of citizens is a better way to measure success

Victor Koo



There will be spas and clubs where people will go for massage and meditation and micro-dosing with psychedelics

Dr Rick Doblin



We have a whole generation who are less comfortable taking risks – they're anxious, fragile and depressed

Freddie Moross



Gen Z use phones as 'digital pacifiers'

PHOTO: CARLOS SANJUAN/SHUTTERSTOCK

Dr Rick Doblin, founder and executive director of the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, also spoke about new research into psychedelics and mental wellness, specifically, MDMA (known more commonly as the party drug Ecstasy) which he predicts will be approved by the US Food and Drug Administration for prescription by 2023. "Our goal is mass mental health, and that's what we're moving towards," said Dr Doblin. "Psychedelics have been used for thousands of years, so it's not surprising there's value in them."

Dr Doblin said that much as we've seen the mainstreaming of yoga and mindfulness, psychedelic use will soon follow. "If you're not working in psychedelics now, you will be," he told the audience.

If you're not quite ready for micro-dosing at your club or spa, Freddie Moross, co-founder and CEO of Mynd Group, spoke about the importance of music for mental wellness and creating authentic connections – especially for millennials and Gen Z. Moross pointed to statistics showing that 35 per cent of Gen Z and 31 per cent of millennials have taken time off from work due to anxiety or stress since the start of the pandemic and are looking for support.

Lifestyle actions determine whether genes that promote cancer are on or off

*Wellbeing is a skill
– similar to learning
how to play the violin
– the key is practice*

“We have a whole generation who are less comfortable taking risks – they’re anxious, fragile and depressed,” said Moross. “They have a digital ‘pacifier’. Music and audio can form a fantastic break from screens. Music as a tool for mental health can transcend cultural boundaries.”

Public health and mental wellness

This crisis in mental health – which was already an issue way before the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, but has been exacerbated by the events of the last few years – was echoed by many throughout the Summit. Music, mindfulness, breathwork and social connection were all offered as avenues to help heal the world – and from a business perspective, are all things that can be brought into a health club.

“The pandemic has exacted a toll on our global wellbeing,” said Dr Richard J Davidson, founder and director of the US-based Center for Healthy Minds. “In every single country in the world, the level of depression is greater than pre-COVID, and in many countries, it’s significantly greater.”

In conversation with Dr Roizen, Dr Davidson discussed the plasticity of wellbeing and the four pillars



In every country in the world, the level of depression is greater than pre-COVID, and in many, it’s greater

Dr Richard J Davidson



Nancy Min and architect Veronica Schreibeis Smith



Five-and-a-half minutes of mindfulness a day is sufficient to create robust change

► associated with different brain networks: awareness (our capacity to regulate our attention), connection (healthy relationships, kindness and gratitude), insight (curiosity and knowledge of oneself – a key to our wellbeing is changing our relationship with this narrative), and purpose (our core values and sense of direction in life). If we think of wellbeing as a skill – similar to learning how to play the violin, he said, then the key is practice, so the question is: can we develop a precision medicine for wellness?

Dr Davidson shared data from a new study that suggests that just five-and-a-half minutes of mindfulness a day was sufficient to create robust change – just slightly longer than most of us spend each day brushing our teeth. “We are in a serious crisis of wellbeing throughout the planet, and we need strategies to cultivate wellbeing urgently,” he said. “We need to take our minds as seriously as our teeth.”

Wellness real estate and senior living

Another area that was already underway before COVID but has exploded since the start of the pandemic is wellness real estate and architecture.

“The demand for healthy buildings was strong before COVID – during pandemic the demand has skyrocketed,” said Joanna Frank, founder and CEO of the Center for Active Design. “Where you live and where you work is having a measurable impact on your health, whether you’re aware of it or not.”

Frank said tenants are driving demand for healthy buildings across all segments – residential, commercial and industrial – and that according to a pre-COVID MIT study, certified healthy buildings get 4.4 per cent



Health has become the baseline – investors are now seeing it as essential

Joanna Frank



► GWS researchers looked at the impact of COVID on the sector

to 7.7 per cent more rent per square foot than non-certified and non-registered. "Health has become the baseline – investors are now seeing it as essential," said Frank. "Investor sentiment around healthy buildings has changed massively because of COVID. Everyone's eyes have been opened to the importance of public health."

A panel on wellness architecture looked at the idea of 'thin places' – energetic areas where the physical and the spiritual are closely connected – but also delved further into biophilic design and its impact on creativity and stress management, and how COVID has shifted the demand for healthy buildings. "The cool new amenity in buildings is clean air," said Joseph Allen, director of the Healthy Buildings Programme and associate professor at Harvard's TH Chan School of Public Health. "We didn't know how a lot of respiratory diseases spread, and there has been a full shift [since COVID]."

Chip Conley, founder of the Modern Elder Academy, spoke about the coming disruption in senior living. Conley – a seasoned hotelier who founded Joie de Vivre at age 26 and later helped put Airbnb on the map – is working on a regenerative community in Baja, Mexico, and said that 'intentional communities' are about to go mainstream, in part because the senior ▶



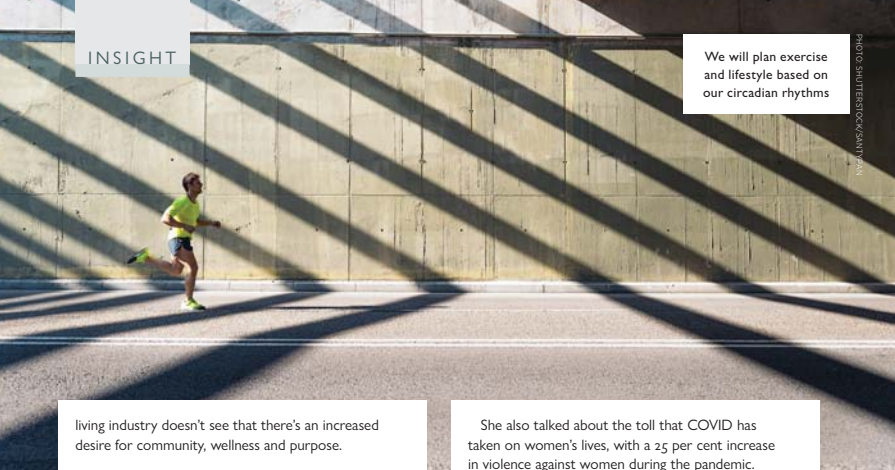
Dr Nicola Finley (above) and Mickey Beyer-Clausen



*The senior living industry doesn't see
there's an increased desire for wellness*



'Intentional communities'
are disrupting the senior
living industry



living industry doesn't see that there's an increased desire for community, wellness and purpose.

Community wellness

Community is also at the heart of wellness strategy when it comes to reaching people of colour; GWS advisory board member Dr Nicola Finley discussed how storytelling can be used to help sustain behavioural changes by creating meaning for past events. "Storytelling engages people's intellect, but also their emotions, and it can be a way to promote healthy behaviour," she said. "It's particularly effective among racial and ethnic groups with a tradition of storytelling and a history of medical mistrust."

Dr Michelle A Williams, dean of the faculty at Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, spoke about the inequalities in healthcare – particularly in the US – that COVID exposed. "COVID has done something that has made the invisible more visible," she said. "Race, ethnicity and your zip code all determined how well you made it through the pandemic."



We're a treatment-driven society and we need to be a prevention-driven society

Dr Suzanne Steinbaum

She also talked about the toll that COVID has taken on women's lives, with a 25 per cent increase in violence against women during the pandemic. "We're taking back four decades in the advances we've made for women as a result of this pandemic," she said. "This has to be a moment that says public health equity justice should not be undervalued."

An impressive panel on the economic impact of investing in women's health featured Carolee Lee, CEO and founder of Women's Health Access Matters (WHAM); Dr Robynne Chutkan, founder and CEO of the Digestive Center for Wellness; and Dr Suzanne Steinbaum of SRSHeart Inc. As Lee explained, women are not only 50 per cent of the workforce, they also control 60 per cent of wealth, 85 per cent of spending, and 80 per cent of healthcare decisions. "Women's health is an economic issue that we cannot afford to ignore," she said. "I believe women drive the economy – yet women are an understudied species and totally underrepresented in health studies."

Lee went on to tell a stunned audience that it took an act of US Congress in 1993 for the National Institute



Renee Moorefield, Richard Carmona and Susie Ellis

of Health (NIH) to include women in their research, and it wasn't until 2016 that the NIH required female test subjects to be included in medical research.

Dr Chutkan went on to discuss the ways in which the female digestive tract is completely different from the male (we have a longer colon and a wider pelvis, which is a lot more crowded by our reproductive system, and there are hormonal differences). With all we know about the gut microbiome these days, these differences are more important than ever. "The health of our microbiome is inextricably tied to the health of our bodies," said Dr Chutkan. "We have seven-times more nerve cells in our gut than in our spinal cord, and most serotonin is made in the gut. We're animated by our microbiome." And while there has been much discussion about the gut/brain connection, Dr Steinbaum talked about the important connections between the mind and the heart. "It's really about how we live, and stress management is a big part of that," she said. "The cardiology community really needs to look at people holistically. We're a treatment-driven society, and we need to be a prevention-driven society."

American TV personality and CEO of State of Menopause, Stacy London, talked about the need for "an entire menopause ecosystem" that resides at "the corner of self-care and healthcare."

"Between 45 and 60 we're becoming culturally irrelevant – you can start to feel you're losing who you were," she said. "Knowledge, education and information are essential to the impact of menopause."

Sleep and breathwork

Sleep expert Dr Michael Breus enlightened us on the importance of understanding your chronotype in thinking about sleep health, and the importance of a 'body movement schedule' for consistent energy throughout the day. Dr Breus suggested stretching movements in the morning, shaking mid-morning, bouncing after lunch, building mid-afternoon, and

Women's health was a major subject of debate



Energy gains have to outpace energy drains: stretch in the morning, shake mid-morning, bounce after lunch, build mid-afternoon and balance before bed

Dr Breus

balance movements before bed. In the end, he said, it comes down to the simple fact that your "energy gains have to outpace your energy drains".

But, he explained, those gains can sometimes come from unexpected places. "You'd be shocked at how much energy an act of kindness gives you," he said. "And laughter changes your perspective; music changes your entire energy pattern."

Dr Rebecca Robbins, a sleep specialist from Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, said that while sleep deficiency costs the United States US\$411bn (£371bn, £301bn) and the EU €680bn (US\$754bn, £563bn) in lost productivity each year, only 10 per cent of workplace wellbeing programmes address the need for sleep health. This fatigue cost has become even more pronounced since the pandemic began, said Dr Robbins, with 39.3 per cent of Americans reporting disturbed sleep due to COVID, 40.9 per cent reporting adverse mental conditions, and sleep medication sales up 18 per cent since the pandemic. Aside from its impact on the workforce and on our physical health, "sleep is a back door to improving mental health," said Dr Robbins. ▶

- Mickey Beyer-Clausen, founder of circadian rhythm app Timeshifter, brought Dr Steven W Lockley, a neuroscientist at Brigham and Women's Hospital, and former NASA astronaut Mike Massimino on stage to announce the debut of a Timeshifter for shift workers, who suffer negative consequences by having their circadian rhythm disrupted. Shift workers are less productive, have high absenteeism, weakened immune systems, a 30 per cent increased risk of accident or injury, and are three times more likely to be hospitalised due to COVID, said Beyer-Clausen.

These statistics are a window into the importance of circadian rhythm. "We have never been so distracted from our biology, and it genuinely disrupts our health and wellbeing," said Beyer-Clausen. "We're working to build a future where our individual circadian time is synchronised with our clock time."

Beyer-Clausen stressed that everyone has an individual circadian rhythm, and in future, we'll use it to inform our lifestyle. He said: "Circadian time is affecting all of us – soon you'll take your vaccine, train for a marathon, and plan your diet and exercise based on your circadian time," he said.

The power of breathwork

Dr Andrew Huberman, professor of neurobiology and ophthalmology and psychiatry at Stanford University School of Medicine in California, outlined ways for highly effective mind-body control using breathwork. Common variables in breathwork include rate, intensity, nasal versus mouth, inhale and exhale ration, and ribcage expansion versus diaphragmatic breathing. "Meditation and breathwork can change the mechanical and the chemical," he explained.

Bathing your cells in dopamine and serotonin is completely different from bathing them in cortisol and adrenaline, said Dr Jeffrey Rediger, assistant



(L-R) Pornthip Noppakoon, Esther Fieldgrass and Leisure Media's Megan Whitby



Our path to wellness and longevity will be driven not by spinach and yoga, but by technology

John Nosta, NostaLab

professor at Harvard Medical School and author of *Cured: How to heal your life*. "A lot of us live in chronic fight-or-flight mode, and we're not even aware of it."

Dr Rediger's book looks at evidence around people with incurable illnesses who have suddenly healed, and why this happened. "As doctors, we're trained to make a diagnosis and prescribe medicine, but we don't understand how people heal," he said. "There's nothing spontaneous about spontaneous remission – everything has a cause, it's just that we're not asking the right questions."

His research showed it was the people who have made major shifts in lifestyle and perception who changed outcomes. "There's huge relevance in this for the 85 to 90 per cent of illnesses we treat as incurable, but which in fact are lifestyle-related and reversible: diabetes, heart disease, cancer, lung disease, and autoimmune illness," he said.

For John Nosta, president of NostaLab and an expert on the field of digital health, the future is clear. He said: "Our path to wellness and longevity will be driven not just by spinach and yoga, but by technology."

Mia Kyricos of Kyricos and Associates left us with some pointers on where the industry should be heading, calling for a new role of 'chief wellbeing officer' to change the culture. She added: "It's time to make wellness part of our DNA." ●



Gil Basche talked about medical integration



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Software SOLUTIONS

Each health club has its own unique challenges, but the right tech solution can make all the difference. In the first of a two-part series, specialists share how they've solved specific issues

Our technology allowed 1Rebel to upload its own content and stream it to 32 screens across four workout zones

Ernst De Neef

Funxion

1Rebel approached us to provide a solution that would support its trainers in delivering a more personalised workout experience for its functional, high-intensity 1Rebel Rig concept. This is the kind of project we get excited about, so we explored how our digital solutions could be applied.

The result was the installation of our MultiScreen Solution. Our technology allowed 1Rebel to upload its own content to our Virtual Player platform and stream it to 32 screens that we helped strategically position across four workout zones: assault bike, rower, bench, and rig.

Individual screens were programmed to independently display single exercise videos in sync with the other 31 screens in the circuit, creating a digital coaching resource at each workout station. The implementation of our MultiScreen software



The installation fused digital and in-person instruction

created a workout environment that freed up 1Rebel's trainers to focus more on motivating, inspiring, and generally delivering interactions that enhance the individual workout experience of their customers.

Through this fusion of digital and in-person instruction and coaching, 1Rebel has evolved the classic circuit concept and elevated the experience for participant and trainer to a new level. This is the future of boutique and gym-floor training.

We had to consider the Arabic translation of the member app and the gender separation elements



PHOTO: FISIKAL

Emma Excell

Fisikal

Activ, a gym chain in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, which has separate gyms for both men and women, approached us to create a custom-branded experience for its members.

Features of particular interest to them were our digital solutions for membership management, bookings for group exercise and personal training and payments, as well as the option to launch live streaming and on-demand workouts. We'll also be integrating with their local access control partner.

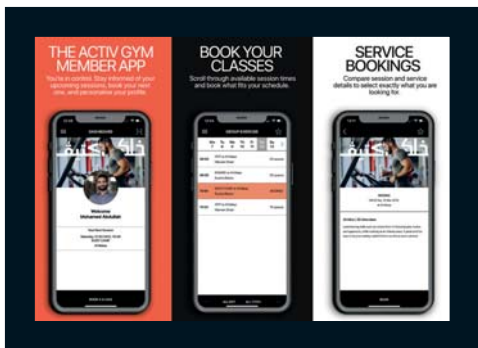


PHOTO: FISIKAL

This project included a number of custom developments – culturally, we had to consider the Arabic translation, navigation of the member app and gender separation elements. In order to do this, we set up the system to ensure there was no overlap between male and female members when booking. We also had to create specific reporting requirements so men and women are displayed on the dashboards as two separate 'clubs'.

Activ needed to use its local payment cards through the Fisikal booking systems and comply with recent tax changes and invoicing to meet Saudi requirements.

Using an in-app lead generation module, South Downs Leisure gained 300 new members in six months



PHOTO: INNOVATISE

Thomas Schuster

Innovatise

Our client, South Downs Leisure, was looking for a solution to streamline its membership sales with a view to getting more leads each month, and converting those to memberships with as little work as possible for staff.

Until this time, the operator had been relying on members referring friends through word of mouth, with minimal manual marketing and no technology in place to support them.

To overcome this issue, South Downs Leisure used the myFitApp Lead

Generation module. Integrated within its branded app, this feature allowed it to incentivise its members to send referral messages to their friends and family members. Members could use the app to send messages via different channels, including WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, email and text. Their friends received a unique link that they used to provide their details and retrieve a joining offer.

Using the in-App Lead Generation module, South Downs Leisure gained 300 new members in six months, including a 50 per cent conversion of referrals to leads, and 70 per cent conversion of leads to new members.



PHOTO: INNOVATISE

Magicline helped Chronofit get more trial sessions booked



PHOTO: MAGICLINE

Our app empowers members to manage their personal details and information without the interaction of a staff member

Lucas Lefevre

Magicline

Last summer, French EMS franchise Chronofit chose Magicline to support its development. The company already had software in place, but it was not meeting all of its needs, especially the need to be more digital.

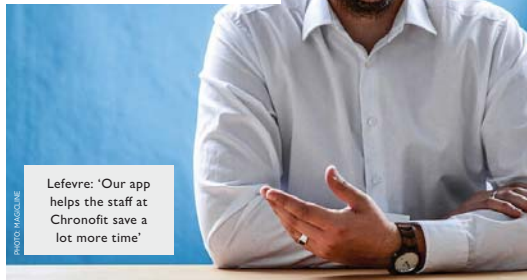
Magicline gave Chronofit the opportunity to have a more efficient interaction with members. We helped the company get more trial sessions booked and simplified the flow of appointment bookings.

Chronofit clients can now book sessions in the app and the booking is instantly registered in the gym's planning system. For managers, it's a real time saver.

Our member app also empowers members to manage their personal details and information without the interaction of a staff member in the studio. Finally, Magicline allows API integration to the client's website so trial session bookings and online membership registrations run smoothly with their corporate identity.

Chronofit is currently reworking its website to allow clients to book directly on the website. Before this, customers had to fill out a form or call the studio.

Our overall aim was to support the daily life of Chronofit's franchisees who needed an efficient tool to run their business, as they sometimes work alone or with limited staff. We're constantly in communication with the client to ensure Magicline covers all needs.



Lefevre: 'Our app helps the staff at Chronofit save a lot more time'

PHOTO: MAGICLINE

Using Mindbody Capital, Favad Malik got fast and flexible funding for his business



PHOTO: MINDBODY

Emily Bartels

Mindbody

Yoga London is a modern, unfussy yoga studio located in Idaho, USA. The idea for Yoga London was born out of founder Favad Malik's experience in personal financial wealth management, which taught him family, health and wealth are connected.

Opening just four months before the COVID-19 pandemic, Yoga London experienced challenges from the start. Between months of shutdowns and quick pivots to online classes, growth hasn't always been easy. Securing traditional financing can be a time-consuming process, and Malik didn't have time to focus on this while running and growing his business. He also



PHOTO: MINDBODY

Mindbody funding has empowered growth

ran into hurdles securing capital, as he's a UK passport holder and was ineligible for funding from traditional American lenders.

Using Mindbody Capital, designed to provide wellness businesses with easy access to funds, Malik received fast and flexible funding that helped him market to a wider audience, increase recruitment efforts, and bring on more staff. Through his partnership with Mindbody, he plans to open additional locations and continue growing a community.

We enabled Club Towers to create customisable family memberships



PHOTO: PERFECT GYM

Peter Croft

Perfect Gym

As a high-end health and racquet club, Club Towers offers a unique experience, combining fitness facilities with spa and nutrition, recognising the importance of giving members a complete club experience. The operator needed a membership management system that allowed it to offer customisable memberships with automated multi-zone access capabilities.

Club Towers membership packages are centred on families or 'groups', where individual members of the family or group can have tailored packages assigned to their membership under the family or group umbrella.

Perfect Gym enabled Club Towers to create customisable family memberships that give each family member unique accesses combined into one monthly package. This means, for instance, you can have adults with

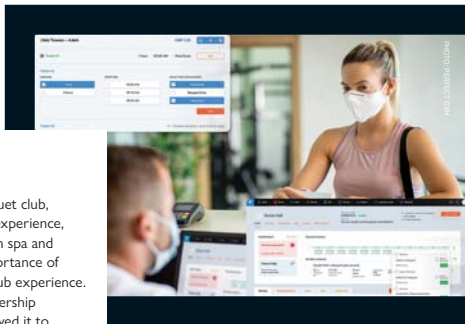


PHOTO: PERFECT GYM

racket sports access and children with pool access, all included in the same membership. Customisable family memberships bring simplicity and transparency to Club Towers. Families only have to pay once for a package tailored to their needs, instead of being oversold on packages that only certain family members will use.

Using Perfect Gym's open API and ecosystem of digital partners, members can also now reserve specific zones of the facilities according to their package. ●

Change it up

What to do when your changing rooms need a refresh, but your budget is stretched? These specialists share their top tips for easy upgrades that won't break the bank

David Fitchett

Fitlockers

Some cubs are switching to electronic locker security, with sophisticated control systems available in several formats to manage access to discrete areas.

Security management is too often a thorn in the side of club managers, who have to handle the aftermath of lost or mislaid

PHOTO: FITLOCKERS



55

With costs rising across the board, operators should commit now to bake in prices

locker keys, so I see the sense of switching to keyless systems for that reason alone.

More complex security solutions can risk other issues though, so I always ensure clubs are conversant with the technology and they're sure the move to electronic is the right one for them.

A good first step from traditional is to digital electronic keypad locks, which are reliable and competitively priced.

For 20 years, we've supplied lockers to the fitness and spa sectors, however, current conditions spell major challenges for operators, manufacturers and installers. Supply issues, shipment delays, rising timber prices and inflation herald a potentially stormy period ahead.

We can adapt locker styles, sizes and materials to fit any budget, as every job we handle is made to order – nothing is 'standard'. But with costs rising across the board, the message to operators has to be 'commit now to bake in prices'.



There are challenges with the supply chain



PHOTO: CROWN SPORTS LOCKERS

Spencer Grimwood

Crown Sports Lockers

The changing room is the first place members see after the reception area, and the last place before leaving, so make sure they're equal to – and complement – the rest of the facilities.

In times of economic uncertainty, leisure operators are understandably cautious when it comes to allocation of capital expenditure, so if you're considering a refresh of your changing rooms, but you're unsure if now's the right time, then consider giving them an interim facelift.

36
Upgrading rather than replacing your lockers is not only the cheaper option, it reduces your carbon footprint

A good way to do this is to change the existing key locks – you could upgrade to a coinless mechanism for a more convenient alternative.

Replacing the locker doors or panels can also improve the look immensely.

Upgrading your lockers rather than replacing them is not only the cheaper option, it's also more environmentally friendly and reduces your carbon footprint.

A refurbishment is not only an opportunity to freshen up the facilities, it's also an opportunity to create changing rooms that will eliminate existing operating issues and provide an environment your members will enjoy for years. ▶



Freshen up your changing rooms with new locker doors

Howard Braband

GymkitUK/Fit Interiors

LED lighting around the tops of lockers or skirting can really make an impact, and bring a dull changing room to life for even the lowest budget, while new vanity units with integrated LED lighting can also add impact to a changing room for a relatively low outlay, along with re-upholstered benching for a high-end feel.

There are also some attractive locking systems on the market such as digital keypad or proximity locks. These offer a good solution in dressing up an old locker door, along with new locker numbers and handles.

It's also possible to spruce up tired lockers without breaking the bank, although, a 'cheap' locker refurb can be a costly waste of time and money and not the quick win you'd planned, so proceed with caution.

Some operators have explored vinyl wrapping locker doors, which can prove more cost-effective than changing the doors

PHOTO: GYMKITUK/FIT INTERIORS



LED lights can bring a changing room to life

SS
LED lighting
around the tops of
lockers or skirting
can bring a dull
changing room to
life for even the
lowest budget

completely. There's a huge range of finishes available, but it doesn't come without risk, so be cautious if considering this option.

The doors may appear shiny and new, but if the carcasses are battered, customers will know immediately when they open the door that corners have been cut.

We're often asked to replace doors as a cheaper alternative to replacing the entire locker, but if we survey the site and the carcasses are old and damaged we highlight the issues – after doors have been replaced, screw holes can be left showing in the carcasses from old hinges and getting a solid fix into an old carcass can be difficult, so be realistic about what's possible.

Gregg Rumble

Safe Space Lockers

The full-scale refurbishment of changing areas isn't always feasible. Budget constraints, available space and timescales all need to be considered when exploring options.

However, there are smart ways in which clubs can refresh without a full renovation.

PHOTO: SAFE SPACE LOCKERS



SS
Internally
cladding existing
cubicles is a
simple effective
way of refreshing
the space

If the aim is to upgrade a changing room's look and feel or refresh it in line with a facility rebrand, the focus should be on changing the visible features to make an impact.

Check to see what can be re-used – locker carcasses, infills, and bench supports and frames are often durable enough to be retained, saving time and money, and these elements often go unnoticed by members, so retaining them will make little difference to the end result.

New bench tops and locker doors are a popular way to freshen up your changing rooms, while installing digital or combination locks not only contributes to an upgraded look and feel but can also improve the user experience.

Internally cladding changing room cubicles is a simple effective way of refreshing the space while keeping the existing structure. This can also be done to match upgrades elsewhere, so the new design is carried throughout the space.



New bench tops are a popular refresh



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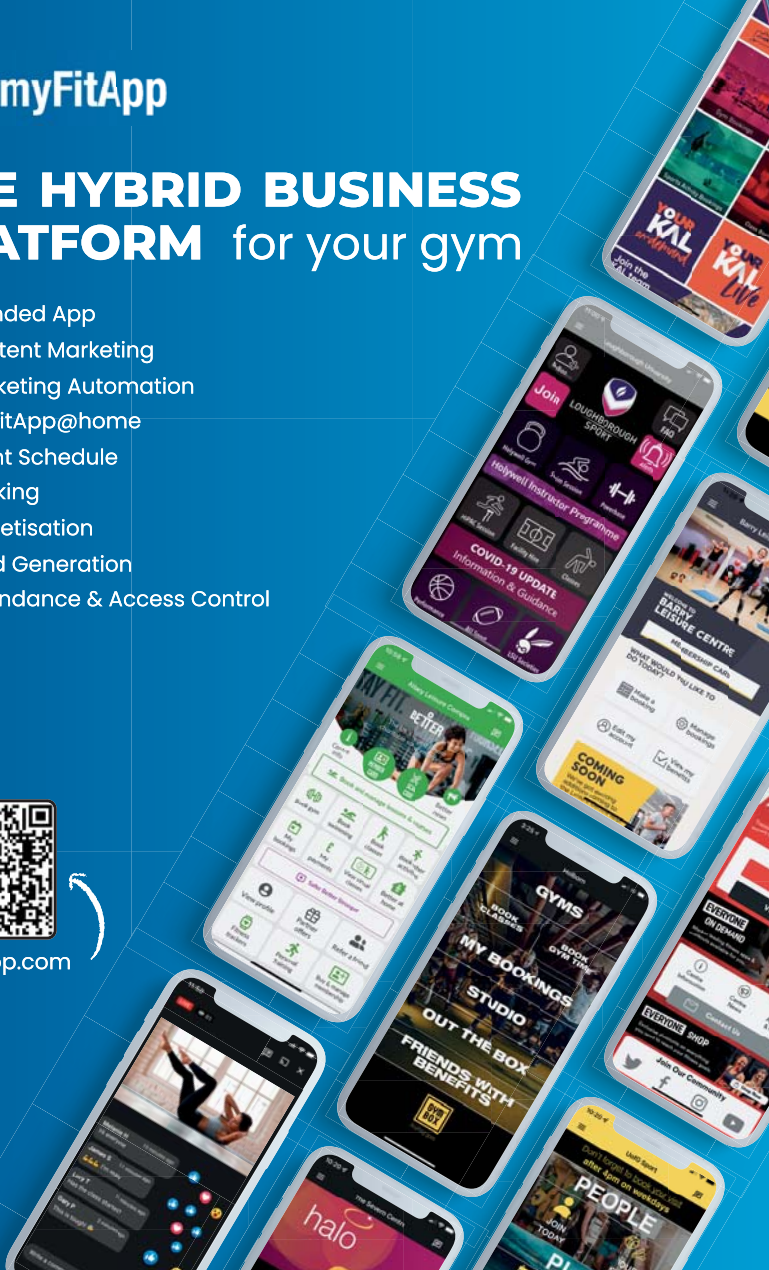


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Product innovation



Steph Eaves rounds up the latest launches in health and fitness

Uptivo's Boxing Tracker will increase client motivation, says Ely Maspero

Uptivo has launched a boxing tracker, which comes to the market at a time of increased demand for combat training and gives trainers a tool to differentiate their offer and increase clients' motivation.

The product incorporates wrist sensors, which can be worn over or under gloves, and is designed to scale easily to avoid the need for special installations or costly investments in dedicated punching bags.



● Wrist sensors transmit data to receivers in the studio

The tracker monitors workouts in real-time and transmits data to Uptivo receivers installed in the health club, allowing members to see their performance on the club's displays. It also records the number of left and

right punches, as well as their power and speed.

Each fitness workout generates a report that is saved in the cloud and is available via Uptivo's web portal and app.

"Pair a heart-rate monitoring system with the



PHOTO: UPTIVO

This innovation will bring members' experience to the next level

Ely Maspero

Uptivo Boxing Tracker – Uptivo's newest innovation for combat fitness classes – and you're ready to bring your members' experience to the next level," says Ely Maspero, Uptivo CMO. fitness-kit.net/keyword Uptivo

ABC Ignite will help Workout Anytime continue to adapt, says Mike Escobedo

ABC Fitness Solutions and franchise Workout Anytime have expanded their relationship.

In a strategic move to streamline its technology

solutions and lower the overall cost of ownership, Workout Anytime is consolidating many of its current technology functions and will deploy the entire ABC Ignite solution.

Scalable and flexible, Ignite offers a suite of software to run health club sales, membership management and operations, as well as customer engagement and revenue optimisation. It also has a dashboard called Ignite Insights.

"The fitness industry has experienced unprecedented

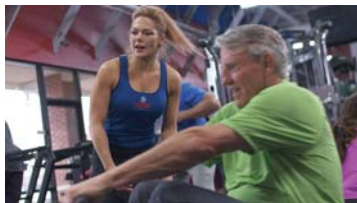


PHOTO: ABC FITNESS SOLUTIONS

● ABC Ignite is a suite of club management solutions

change. Workout Anytime is a brand that has continuously adapted to the changes required throughout the pandemic, from safety to new technology, enabling its members to remain using the clubs," says Mike Escobedo,

chief customer officer of ABC Fitness Solutions.

"We're delighted to be deepening our partnership with a forward-thinking operator like Workout Anytime."

fitness-kit.net/keyword ABC Fitness Solutions

PHOTO: DAVID LOI STUDIOS



ABC Ignite is designed to be scalable and flexible

Mike Escobedo

Schwinn's X & Z Bikes will strengthen the cycling community, says **Ashley Thorne**

Core Health and Fitness has announced the arrival of its next generation of indoor cycling bikes – Schwinn X and Z. The bikes were designed to simplify the user experience while expanding instructor possibilities.

The Schwinn Z Bike uses colour and light to celebrate the styles and strengths of instructors. It's enabled with Gym Kit software to pair with Apple Watch, which can sync data with compatible cardio equipment, including indoor bikes, providing users with more accurate information about their workout.

The Z Bike makes the science of intensity-based personal Zone training more



PHOTO: CORE HEALTH & FITNESS

The X and Z Bikes are visionary for this unique time in fitness history

Ashley Thorne

accessible for broad-based appeal, allowing all fitness levels to ride as one by personalising their zones. It also amplifies the music by 'colourising' pedal speed.

The Schwinn X Bike, has no console and relies on gym members using

fitness apps and virtual content for their ride.

"The X and Z Bikes are visionary for this unique time in fitness history. Their connectivity, versatility, and inclusivity make them figuratively (and literally for the Z Bike) the light at

the end of the tunnel as gyms reopen," says Ashley Thorne, director of group cycles and sustainability. "The result will be a cycling community that is stronger and more resilient than ever."

fitness-kit.net KEYWORD
Core Health & Fitness



● The Z Bike pairs with Apple Watch, enabling data syncing

PHOTO: SCHWINN

Eleiko has become a global distributor for Beaver Fit, says **Dale Beech**

Eleiko has partnered with Beaver Fit, a global manufacturer of outdoor fitness and military human performance solutions, to bring enhanced outdoor training capabilities to new and existing customers

Beaver Fit container gyms, sheds and boxes are used to create outdoor training facilities, providing integrated



PHOTO: ELEIKO

● Customers can purchase BeaverFit containers stocked with Eleiko kit

step rise in the utilisation of outdoor solutions within the performance sector, this partnership is perfect for both of our brands and our customers," says Dale Beech, managing director of Eleiko.

In the UK and US BeaverFit will be offering upgraded Eleiko equipment packages for new and existing clients, giving them the option to purchase BeaverFit containers fully equipped with Eleiko's elite range of strength accessories and free weights. **fitness-kit.net KEYWORD**
Eleiko



PHOTO: ELEIKO

This partnership is truly significant

Dale Beech

training and storage to help users train both strength and endurance in tactical and gym-based environments.

This global collaboration sees Eleiko become a distributor for Beaver Fit outdoor training and storage solutions across the EU, UK and US, as well

as representing BeaverFit as exclusive distributors in the Nordic regions.

"For Eleiko UK this partnership is significant and brings the capabilities to serve both our existing and new customer bases with best-in-class outdoor training spaces. With the

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One 45 minute session was enough to register a positive impact

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/JACEK LAR



Exercise can counter diabetes damage

Being physically active can heal damage caused by diabetes, enabling the activation of a natural system that grows new blood vessels, according to research in the US

Diabetes not only damages existing blood vessels but also hinders the body's innate ability to grow new ones in the face of disease and injury.

Scientists at Medical College of Georgia (MCG), however, have found that exercise can help enable angiogenesis – the formation of new blood vessels – which in turn reverses the damage caused by diabetes.

In a study published in *The FASEB Journal*, a team at MCG's Vascular Biology Center found the first evidence that in the face of diabetes, even one 45-minute session of moderate-intensity exercise prompts the release of more exosomes into the blood to deliver more of the protein ATP7A directly to cells, which can set angiogenesis in motion. Exosomes are submicroscopic packages filled with biologically active 'cargo'.

One cardio session

In a sample of healthy 50-something-year-olds, one cardio session increased levels of ATP7A in the exosomes that attached to endothelial cells.

Exercise also increased levels of extracellular superoxide dismutase (SOD3), an important natural antioxidant produced by vascular smooth

Exercise can stimulate the growth of new blood vessels when existing ones are ravaged by diabetes

muscle cells in the walls of blood vessels, as well as skeletal muscle cells, which helps maintain healthy levels of reactive oxygen species or ROS.

ROS is a natural byproduct of our use of oxygen that is an important cell signal, enabling a variety of functions. But in diabetes, high blood sugar levels result in higher ROS levels that instead hinder important normal functions.

Dr Tohru Fukui, MCG vascular biologist and cardiologist and lead author of the study, said: "ATP7A levels are reduced in diabetes and we now have some of the first evidence that exosomes actually impair angiogenesis among those with Type 2 diabetes.

Read the full research report: *Exercise improves angiogenic function of circulating exosomes in type 2 diabetes: Role of exosomal SOD3* at www.hcmmag.com/angiogenic

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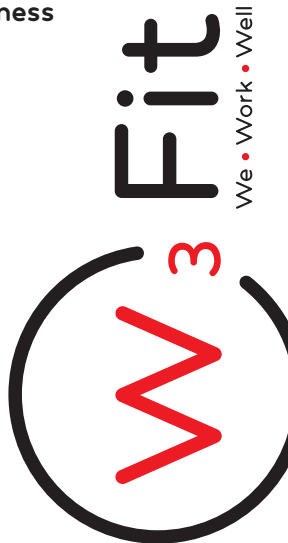
We are looking forward to meeting with suppliers face to face again so the news of We Work Well launching W3Fit for our industry is fantastic. We look forward to being part of the inaugural event.

Kevin Yates, CEO, TRIB3

It is great to hear about the launch of W3Fit, where industry leaders can meet, network and form everlasting friendships. We look forward to joining what surely will be a must attend event in our calendar.



Dave Wright, Creator & CEO, MYZONE



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