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Industry Giants Announce Unprecedented Marriage Between Health Care and Fitness; Potential Impact for Millions

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Newswise — (Indianapolis)- To jointly address the rapid progression of chronic diseases and skyrocketing health care costs, Exercise is Medicine®(EIM), a global health initiative managed by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), along with the American Council on Exercise (ACE) and the Medical Fitness Association (MFA) today announced a new collaboration called the Exercise is Medicine Solution. The partnership and the EIM Solution will bring together health care systems, clinicians, fitness professionals and community resources to affect positive health outcomes and reduce health care costs. The announcement was made at the National Press Club in Washington D.C. and included a keynote by 18th U.S. Surgeon General Regina Benjamin, M.D.

“Prevention is an imperative,” said Benjamin, “as more American families struggle to deal with chronic diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension and strokes. Much of the illness and early death related to these chronic diseases can be prevented by increased physical activity. The EIM Solution is an innovative approach that, through a prescription, links the medical profession with physical activity professionals and community resources. I commend these organizations for their vision and leadership.”

The EIM Solution’s multipronged approach has never been implemented in the US and will include physical activity counseling, as well as prescription and referral strategies, particularly those linking health care and community-based resources. Ultimately, the goal is to achieve global targets for the reduction of inactivity, related morbidity and mortality, and health care costs.

ACSM’s Exercise is Medicine initiative was launched in 2008 and has grown rapidly into 43 countries. Thousands of physicians and exercise professionals have been trained and millions of patients have been impacted around the world. “We are grateful for all we’ve accomplished in the first eight years,” said Adrian Hutber, vice president of Exercise is Medicine. “The EIM Solution marks the beginning of the next phase in our strategy, which is to engage major health systems and communities and work together to improve health and combat chronic diseases by promoting physical activity and fitness.”

As part of today's announcement, the new partners also introduced the Greenville Health System (South Carolina), which is among the 20 largest health systems in the US., as the first to fully adopt the EIM Solution. Components adopted by GHS include:

- Incorporating Exercise is Medicine as required teaching into all four years of curriculum to educate future physicians on the health benefits of exercise.
- Incorporating physical activity as a vital sign in their EPIC Electronic Medical Record (EMR)
- Using EIM Your Prescription for Health patient education material in the EPIC EMR
- Employing a full-time EIM Coordinator to take patient referrals and work with them to refer to either Greenville Healthcare System Medical Fitness Center or one of the Greenville community Y locations
- Onboarding Coordinator at the Y will receive all patient referrals, meet with them for onboarding and assign them to an EIM group physical activity class

"The EIM initiative and solution align perfectly with GHS' vision to transform health care for the benefit of the people and communities we serve," said Sean Bryan, M.D., chair of the Department of Family Medicine at GHS. Dr. Bryan also quoted Adam Sher, M.D., a GHS internal medicine physician in Greer, SC who said, "We are all very excited to welcome our new partnership with Exercise is Medicine. We think that the EIM Solution will bring great opportunity for lifestyle change and improved health and happiness to our patients and our staff. I believe that the Exercise is Medicine program is going to play a major new role in improving lifestyle, health, and happiness in our patients and their families."

An often missing component of physician-prescribed treatment plans has been the involvement of health and fitness professionals. As part of the EIM Solution, physicians can refer their patients to qualified exercise professionals who hold the EIM Professional Credential. "Fitness professionals are uniquely qualified to help people on a journey of lifestyle change, particularly those with specific training and accredited certifications in health coaching, said ACE Chief Science Officer Cedric Bryant, PhD. "As one of the largest certifying bodies in the United States, ACE will work with ACSM and MFA to reinforce standards for well-qualified health and fitness professionals that will solidify trust between the medical and fitness communities, for the benefit of patients and consumers."

According to Bob Boone, president and CEO of the Medical Fitness Association, the partnership with ACSM and ACE provides the infrastructure to help the EIM Solution succeed. "We're bringing together the researchers, professional credentialing bodies and the medically integrated facilities that provide the basic platform to make EIM work," said Boone. "Creating accountability, motivation and appropriate follow-up for lifestyle interventions is the key to making Exercise is Medicine a cornerstone of preventive medicine and chronic disease management. The combined efforts of our partnership will enable us to provide even more measurable, value-based care and outcomes that will drive improvements in population health – delivered one person at a time."

The partnership between ACSM, ACE and MFA represents nearly half of the fitness professional industry in the U.S. As part of ACSM's phase two strategy, the collaboration will continue the work of expanding the EIM program into other regional health systems. For more about the Exercise is Medicine Program, visit the website at www.exerciseismedicine.org.

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