



Fitness Clubs are Part of the Healthcare Delivery System

Both Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes the role the Social Determinates of Health (SDoH) and health equity plays in overall physical and mental health. In fact, according to WHO data, SDoH account for 30-55% of health outcomes. A significant element of SDoH is the physical environment around us and the opportunities we have access to. To this end, the CDC has recognized for decades the strong role parks and green spaces play in overall health within a community. Likewise, the CDC has long endorsed Physical Education as a critical component of health for youth.

Consistent with those findings is significant emerging research that establishes the density of fitness clubs (FC) within a community increases the likelihood of FC membership, and therefore the overall health of a community. Research by Kaufman et al (2019) indicates that individuals living in areas with the highest quartile of commercial FC were almost 400% more likely to have a FC membership. Kaufman further extends these findings by noting individuals with membership at FC are 2.5 times more likely of meeting the CDC guidelines for physical activity (PA).

These findings are particularly noteworthy given that 46.7% of Michiganders do not meet the CDC recommendations for PA (CDC, 2020) and 20.8% of Michiganders perform no leisure-time PA (Americas Health Rankings, 2020). This lack of PA is driving up the proportion of Michiganders who are suffering from mental and metabolic health issues including but not limited to anxiety, depression, hypertension, insulin resistance, heart disease, stroke risk and suboptimal body composition.

Poor body composition (also including many in the normal BMI range, due to low muscle mass) and physical inactivity are associated with a wide range of deleterious health consequences including, but not limited to heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, insulin resistance, many cancers, poor mental health (depression and anxiety), dementia and many others.

The “real-world” data support these findings as 12.3% of Michiganders have type 2 diabetes, resulting in the 20th highest prevalence of diabetes among adults in the United States (CDC & MDHHS, 2020).

Data from MDHHS suggests Michigan has the 10th highest prevalence of obesity among adults in the United States, with 30% of Michigan adults being classified as obese (BMI \geq 30). An additional 36% of Michigan adults are overweight (BMI 25-29.9) according to MDHHS.

Tragically, at the same time, 19.5% of Michiganders suffer from depression, resulting in the 14th highest prevalence of depression among adults in the United States (CDC & MDHHS, 2020).

In addition to the human suffering caused by these physical and psychological maladies, the economic cost is truly staggering. The US spends over 17% of its GDP on healthcare (more than twice that of any other industrialized nation) and over 80% of that spending is associated with chronic lifestyle diseases, that can be treated, in part, by physical activity and exercise. According to the CDC, physical inactivity costs the US over \$117 billion dollars annually, with a large portion of that cost burden paid by the government and individual families.

The undisputable bottom-line is physical inactivity represents a significant threat to public health, the economy, and even military preparedness¹. While at the same time, meeting the CDC recommendations for PA has also been established by nearly every professional medical and public health organization as an evidence-based, cost effective, and highly efficacious intervention to treat chronic lifestyle diseases.

It is with all of this in mind, and based on the current evidence regarding:

1. The health-enhancing, disease mitigating, benefits of PA,
2. Increased density of FC in a community increases FC membership,
3. Membership to a FC result in a higher likelihood of meeting the recommendations for PA;

It is the recommendation of the Michigan Fitness Club Association Medical & Science Advisory Board (MFCA-MSAB) that political leaders, public health officials, and the medical community view FC as a critical stakeholder in the healthcare delivery system in Michigan. The MFCA-MSAB urges all stakeholders to thoughtfully collaborate with the FC in the State to improve overall population health and reduce the economic burden of increasing healthcare costs.

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¹According to the [Military Sector](#) of the National Physical Activity Plan