

Knowledge Is Power

...Particularly when it comes to your Health Care

Harry Matheis



As a fitness professional, knowledge is power and its delivery is the basic foundation of your industry. To deliver the value of your craft to clients, whether in a personal training session or group setting, the implementation requires knowledge, training and most importantly, excellent delivery skills given client attitudes towards their own fitness. The value proposition for the client is solely dependant on the ability of the fitness professional to process the knowledge, apply strategy, application or counsel, while helping the client towards a desired outcome or goal.

Similarly, in personal health care, knowledge is power for professionals delivering care, and of equal importance, knowledge is also becoming an integral and powerful tool for the patient or *end user* during prevention, treatment, and most importantly actual access to care. Although the first responsibility for understanding health has always rested with the individual, the paradigm is shifting and finds Canadians now also responsible to acquire the knowledge of *how* the changing health care industry works and *how* to gain reasonable access to care in a timely manner. Often the true challenge is found in the ability to navigate the medical *gatekeepers'* channels towards access to care. Medical testing, treatment, therapies, care, knowledge and access to information has enjoyed quantum leaps in recent years, yet the same has not held true for access to care for many Canadians.

With speed and access to information at our fingertips, we often find ourselves immediately on the internet, after a visit to the doctor or walk-in clinic browsing a medical information provider and double-checking or researching that new medication or recent diagnosis. Sometimes we even find ourselves at the doctor's office or walk-in clinic confidently having completed a full on-line self-diagnosis of our current disease state. The main purpose of this visit to the doctor is only to confirm our personal diagnosis and obtain a written prescrip-

When you are sick, or recovering from an accident, you will have more than enough time to think about how you are feeling.

THE FIVE REALITIES YOU THINK ABOUT WHILE YOU ARE TRYING TO GET BETTER:

1. How long before you get better and things return to normal?
2. Your personal finances may cause you to feel even more ill.
3. How will you make your financial ends meet?
4. What you should have, could have, or shouldn't have done to insure your peace of mind prior to this incident.
5. Will you be able to return to your current profession?

tion that we have already researched as the possible cure. Knowledge at the self-diagnosis level may become a problem for individuals and to some extent has become a bane for doctors.

Traditionally, the medical care model begins with a visit to the doctor who asks probing questions and administers a number of general tests to gain more information. If the medical condition is complex, further tests are required and if the problem persists, specialist consultations are usually scheduled. As the months pass in between tests and specialist appointments, the individual gathers information and the experiences of others to further assist with an understanding of the current condition.

For most Canadians, access to health care information is always improving with traditional sources of print, electronic media, support agencies and similar organizations readily available. However, access to medical care continues to be a major stumbling block within the industry itself as well as for patients actually seeking care. This disconnect is found in wait times at emer-

“ Sometimes while you are getting better or convalescing, the crippling financial challenges become greater than the emotional health challenges and your life may seem to be upside down.”

Become informed!

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gency facilities, specialist consultations, scheduled and re-scheduled surgeries, hospital beds and important therapies. For many individuals needing care, the barriers to access may be found in the location and availability, the access to transportation, family, finance, along with simple access to the actual gatekeepers of such care, the doctors themselves.

To summarize, care and treatment has improved, information is more readily available in a variety of mediums yet the access to the delivery of care seems to be moving in the opposite direction. One may conclude that the table is set for our universal health care system to finally acknowledge and surrender to the realities of a free enterprise two-tiered model of health care. Public opinion is mixed, yet many Canadians, especially in some provinces, will agree this is the case.

What should we be doing to help ourselves along the health care path of life?

WELLNESS AND PREVENTION

Knowledge is Power; do not rely on self diagnosis alone, seek professional advice, begin by taking a preventive wellness approach and committing to a balanced, healthy lifestyle of regular exercise, diet, family time and rest... "Everything in moderation including moderation". Understand your health care system and make regular, full physical check-ups with your walk-in or family doctor an integral activity in your health style program.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE & PERSONAL RISK MANAGEMENT

Knowledge is Power; ensure that you have a network that provides you with access to health care, and the resources available to aid you in convalescence and recovery; this access point begins with a family doctor or walk-in clinic.

Guarantee your access to care by enrolling in a supplementary health care benefit program such as the *Can-Fit Pro, Health & Dental Care Benefit Program*; these are excellent programs designed for the fitness professional with your choice of enrolling in an individual program or a group plan if you are a member of a group, club or fitness facility. Either program is a smart decision for tax efficient use of your health-care dollars.

Additionally and very important, review your needs and, with the help of a personal risk professional, obtain valuable critical illness and income insurance coverage now, designed specifically for your situation. Get coverage now while you are in good health as it will not be available when you are not!

As a fitness professional, the delivery of your **knowledge is power** for you and your clients. Your ongoing personal responsibilities require that you maintain a strict level of ex-

cellence and professionalism within your field while constantly increasing your knowledge.

In fitness as in the medical world, knowledge only becomes power when delivered by qualified professionals. The knowledge process and access to medical or fitness care when understood makes Canadians better consumers of these valuable benefits.

As you impart your knowledge through programs to help your clients become better consumers of your fitness and health, services, take a moment and apply the same strategy to your personal situation – are you an informed consumer of your personal health, wellness and personal risk strategy? Do you have a plan?

Get the knowledge and act on your plan with advice from a professional and apply it to your personal situation, it will:

- Result with you ensuring that your personal wellness approach is sound for your age and life stage;
- Your access to a medical care network is established and understood and you have a plan;
- You have guaranteed your access to supplementary medical care, through a sound benefits program while protecting your income and ability to recover in health and lifestyle from an unexpected serious illness or accident. □

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