Accessing Opportunities for Sports and Exercise in the Community

Cheri A. Blauwet, MD
Instructor, Harvard Medical School
Disability Access and Awareness Director
Spaulding Rehabilitation Network
Chair, Medical Committee
International Paralympic Committee

• So you know that exercise is important….
  • But – how does one find opportunities to engage?

• Community barriers can be significant
  • Inaccessible fitness facilities
  • Lack of transportation
  • Costs are too high
  • People may have negative attitudes

• This applies to everyone!
  • However, these barriers may become more complex after SCI
Accessing Opportunities for Sports and Exercise in the Community

• One example...

After formal rehabilitation is over, many people encounter a “GAP”
• Bridging that gap is key to optimizing long-term health

(Rimmer, PM&R 2012)
• Three key points for today:
  1. Be your own advocate
  2. If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again
  3. Find opportunities for exercise everywhere you go

But not here.....

• Opportunities for exercise are diverse
  • Formal adaptive sports and recreation programs
    • Example – Spaulding Adaptive Sports Centers, ExPD
  • Joining a health club
    • Example – your local YMCA
  • Incorporating exercise into every day life
    • Example – taking a wheelchair stroll

• Bottom line – choose what works for you
  • Accessible
  • Feasible
  • And most importantly – fun
• Point #1: **Be you own advocate**
  - Many people involved in fitness programs will never have worked with someone with SCI
  - Educating others and raising awareness is key
  - Example: A Krank Cycle class at your gym?

• Point #2: **If at first you don’t succeed, try again!**
  - **Motivation** has been found to be one of the most important factors that keeps a person involved in exercise over time
  - Not every one, has to like every activity
  - Keep trying until you find something you love
• Point #3: **Find opportunities to exercise - everywhere**
  • When it comes to maintaining fitness – every bit counts
  • “Move it or lose it” is true!
  • Example: Burn machine, take a wheelchair jog

• Resources to consider
  • National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability
    • www.nchpad.org
  • Peter Harrison Center
    • http://www.lboro.ac.uk/research/phc/
  • YMCA Access Programs (vary state to state)
  • Paralympic Sport Clubs
    • http://www.teamusa.org/US-Paralympics/find-a-club
• **Summary**
  • Remember the 3 key points
    • Be your own advocate
    • If at first you don’t succeed, try again
    • Find opportunities to exercise – everywhere

• This will be one of the best things you can do to preserve and optimize your health