

Physical Activity in Health Care

Assessment, Prescription and Referral

Regular physical activity is important in all aspects of physical and mental health and well-being throughout the lifespan. It promotes health, helps treat and prevent diseases, improves quality of life, can provide social interaction, and is environmentally sustainable. In the United States, most of the population does not report enough activity that meet relevant physical activity guidelines. This contributes to 10% of premature deaths and generates \$117 billion in annual healthcare costs.

The Physical Activity Alliance (PAA) is leading a coordinated, multi-sector collaborative effort to develop and achieve a regulatory and policy action plan to embed physical activity assessment, prescription, and referral into the health care system. PAA's action plan includes strategies with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the American Medical Association, the National Commission on Quality Assurance, the National Quality Forum, the Health Level Seven International, and the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology. The involvement and collaboration of all these agencies and organizations is essential to reach the goal of promoting physical activity into care delivery and connecting clinic to community.

Providing physical activity counseling and prescription begins in the clinical visit. The multidisciplinary health care teams should work together for optimal patient engagement and adherence to a short- and long-term active lifestyle, connecting patients to physical activity resources in their communities. Electronic health records (EHR) can assist health care providers in documenting a patient's self-reported physical activity as part of their visits, keep track of progress, advise on physical activity, and make referrals that can make a positive impact on their lifestyles.

Standardizing physical activity assessment, prescription and referrals into the healthcare system will take time and require the involvement of government, non-profits, health systems, healthcare professionals, community providers, technology companies, informatics specialists, and EHR vendors. These changes will transform patient care in the United States, increase levels of physical activity, and ultimately improve quality of life and well-being.

See the Physical Activity Alliance's Action Plan and scientific [article](#) to make physical activity assessment, prescription, and referral a standard of care.



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Reference

Whitsel L, Bantham A, Jarrin R, Sanders L, Stoutenberg M. Physical activity assessment, prescription and referral in US healthcare: How do we make this a standard of clinical practice?. *Progress in Cardiovascular Diseases*. 2020;