

What is a Clinical Exercise Physiologist?

A Clinical Exercise Physiologist (CEP) is an allied health professional who works with persons with chronic diseases and conditions in which exercise has been shown to be beneficial. The CEP performs health, physical activity, and fitness assessments and prescribes exercise as a means to assist in recovery from illness and to manage (complementary treatment) or prevent (primary and secondary prevention) disease. CEPs work primarily in a medically supervised environment that provides a program or service that is directed by a licensed physician.

What is the educational background of Clinical Exercise Physiologists?

Currently, CEPs have either a Bachelor's or Master's degree in Clinical Exercise Physiology or a related exercise science program. However, per CEPA, effective June 2010 all graduates entering the field will be required to have a Master's degree. In addition, a minimum of 600 hours of supervised clinical experiences and certification through the American College of Sports Medicine's Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist (RCEP) or Certified Clinical Exercise Specialist level, are required.

What skills set is unique to the Clinical Exercise Physiologist?

Through their coursework and practical training, CEPs are uniquely qualified to interpret the normal and abnormal response of individuals to an acute bout of exercise and an exercise training program. This includes assisting and/or supervising graded exercise stress tests in apparently healthy people and those with clinically manifest disease. The CEP is trained to develop and implement a safe exercise prescription for patients with a chronic disease or disability. Additionally, behavioral counseling is an integral part of their training and practice, aimed at providing patients with self-help skills for promoting independence; managing future risk; and implementing a regular, safe, and effective exercise therapy.

Who does a Clinical Exercise Physiologist treat?

In addition to healthy clients, CEPs are trained to work with patients with chronic diseases and conditions who are referred by and under the care of a licensed physician. This includes, but is not limited to, patients with cardiovascular disease, pulmonary disease, a metabolic disorder (e.g., diabetes, obesity, chronic kidney disease), cancer, and immune-related disorders.

Where does a Clinical Exercise Physiologist work?

The CEP works primarily in a hospital, clinic, medical fitness center, or other health care setting. Most CEPs currently practice in a cardiac or pulmonary rehabilitation program, exercise oncology service, research setting, clinical exercise testing laboratory, transplant service, or chronic disease management program.