

**Introduction to Special Issue Part II: Collaborative Practices and Physical Activity**

# Demonstrating How Collaborative Practices Contribute to Meaningful Physical Activity

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This issue continues the important discussion on effective interventions by taking a closer look at physical fitness- and sport-based interventions and outcomes of collaborative programs. *Physical activity* is an umbrella term that encompasses exercise, sport, and bodily movements produced by the skeletal muscles resulting from energy expenditure. Documented outcomes of physical activity have included decreased pain, anxiety, and stress; reduced incidence of falls and symptoms of depression; and promotion of healthy lifestyles. Further, participation in physical activity acts like a nonpharmacological therapy because it reduces the effects of many health problems (Carter & VanAndel, 2011). Sports include a variety of individual and team competitions with adaptations that ac-

commodate specific functional limitations (Shank & Coyle, 2002). Results of studies on sports participation suggest positive outcomes like improvements in the quality of social and family life, physical health, and personal enjoyment (Barletta & Loy, 2006; Zabriskie, Lundberg, & Groff, 2005).

Four articles comprise this special issue. Wilhite and colleagues note that adults with Developmental Disabilities and their caregivers benefit from engaging in physical fitness interventions. Their program was a collaborative venture between a nonprofit organization serving persons with IDD and their families, a state developmental disabilities agency, and a university health and exercise science program. Pre- and postintervention assessments indicated statistically significant health

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*Editor's note:* One additional research paper appears in this issue. Dawson, Knapp, and Farmer, in *Camp War Buddies: Exploring the Therapeutic Benefits of Social Comparison in a Pediatric Oncology Camp* assess the effect of attendance at a pediatric oncology camp designed to support the psychosocial needs of youth 8-18 years of age. Their study reveals that campers experienced significant improvements in self-esteem with emergent themes describing carryover impacts in daily lives of campers subsequent to the structured camping experience.

improvements in total cholesterol and resting diastolic blood pressure; and fitness improvements in flexibility, muscular strength, and cardiovascular fitness. Kemeny and Arnhold present the results of a model program, The I Can Do It, You Can Do It (ICDI) program, which implements physical activity and nutrition mentoring experiences for individuals with disabilities in nine sites across the United States. ICDI develops community collaborative partnerships between the University, community recreation facilities (e.g., YMCA), school districts, and human service provider agencies. University students collaborate in a multidisciplinary, evidence-based process as mentors for youth with disabilities to provide 10 weeks of physical activity and nutrition education programs. Findings indicate mentees improve enjoyment of physical activity and increase physical activity levels and healthy eating. Individuals with an above-normal Body Mass Index (BMI) significantly decreased BMI at the end of the program. Mentors improved attitudes toward individuals with disabilities and learned basic mentoring skill strategies. In the third piece, Bedini and Thomas present a model for how to provide adapted sports programs in

the community to youth with physical disabilities. Their paper describes a hub model that successfully provides community-based adapted sports programs to many communities and is based on a philosophy of personal empowerment. Specific strategies for overcoming barriers and methods for duplicating this model are provided. Lastly, Taylor and Yun present the results of a study that investigated the Factors Influencing Staff Inclusion of Youth with Disabilities in Afterschool Programs. The purpose of the study was to identify factors influencing staffs' intention and behavior toward the inclusion of youth with disabilities in physical activity during after-school programs using TPB, a psychological theory that explains how a desired behavior is influenced by one's beliefs and intention to perform that behavior. The analysis indicated that 53% of staffs' intention to include youth with disabilities can be explained by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, while 8% of behavior is explained by staffs' intention. The authors conclude that programs planned to promote the inclusion of youth with disabilities should clearly present the program philosophy and/or their partnering organizations philosophy towards inclusion.

## References

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