

BULLETIN

Monika Tsia, clinical exercise specialist

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BY LAURA BUSHEIKIN

Clinical exercise specialist Monika Tsia is used to seeing a blank look in peoples eyes when she tells them what she does.

Although most people are well aware that physical exercise is one of the most important things we can do to get healthy and stay healthy, not many people know that clinical exercise specialists even exist, let alone what they do.

Luckily, Tsia, who works in cardiac rehabilitation at the Jim Pattison Outpatient Care and Surgery Centre, is passionate about her job.

-I love what I do," she says. -Just talking about it makes me smile. I naturally want to be an advocate for my profession."

-The most common questions are about the difference between a clinical exercise specialist (CES) and an occupational therapist or physiotherapist," says Tsia. -We focus on the overall physiological effects of exercise and how to use it to return the patient to better health."

Her work is clinical in nature and relies on knowledge about physiology, psychology, chronic disease, medication, and diagnostic procedures.

Tsia works as part of a large team and regularly makes referrals to, or consults with, a variety of other health care professionals.

Tsia brings extensive education to her work. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in kinesiology and biology from Simon Fraser University, a Clinical Exercise Specialist certificate from the American College of Sports Medicine, and a Health and Fitness certificate from SFU. She is a certified weight trainer and group fitness leader through the BC Recreation and Parks Association.

Most of the cardiac rehabilitation clients she sees are referred to the program by their doctor after a cardiac event.

-For instance, a patient would be referred to us after a coronary artery bypass surgery. We would discuss precautions and limitations in regards to exercise. If they have had a stress test done, we would discuss the results and prescribe a safe level of exercise. As well, we factor in the medications they are taking and their affects on exercise physiology."

The exercise program consists of cardiovascular and resistance training, and stretching exercises. All clients are monitored and supervised during their exercise program by a team which includes CES.

Seeing people move towards increased health, mobility and confidence after a cardiac event is incredibly fulfilling, says Tsia.

-For instance, I remember one lady who came in wearing her pajamas. She was so frightened of having another heart attack, she was just shuffling her feet slowly because she was scared of moving. We had a look at her results and she certainly was very decompensated. So we put her on an exercise program that was specific to her need.

-It wasn't long till she was coming into class with a big smile and asking when she could learn to use all the different machines. That's why I do what I do!"

Clinical exercise specialist is a growing profession, says Tsia, and the profession is looking forward to working with other programs helping patients with chronic disease.

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180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

Telephone 604-517-0994
1-800-663-2017