

Questions Clinicians Can Use to Vet Fitness Professionals Prior to Referring Patients

Questions That Would Typically Be Answered Via a Trainer's Website Biography

- Do you have a degree in or related to exercise science/kinesiology?
- What are your certifications?
- What are your specialties / areas of expertise?
- How long have you been a practicing fitness professional?
- What type of environment do you train your clients in (e.g., community/gym setting, independent clinic, wellness/rehab facility, hospital, home setting)?
- What is your fee schedule and are you willing to adjust it?

Questions That Will Dig Deeper Than What is Typically Found on a Trainers Biography

- What medical conditions are you familiar with designing programs for?
- What types of resources do you use to determine your exercise programming?
- Describe your philosophy and training style?
- Do you or have you worked/collaborated with physical therapists?
- What information do you typically receive from clinicians who refer patients to you, and how often do you communicate with them about their patients?
- What types of exercises do you commonly use for your exercise programming?
- Can you show me that you're familiar with governing body (ACSM, NSCA) exercise principles and guidelines?
- What nutrition advice do you give your clients?

Specific Questions Related to an Actual Patient Being Referred

- How would you modify your program for my client with _____ (fill in the blank: diabetes, CVD, joint pain, etc...)?
- What would you consider "red flags" to training this patient?
- How do you determine initial loads / intensity?
- What is your method to guide progression?
- How do you assess and correct flexibility / mobility issues?
- Do you allow client / patient autonomy with the program design? If so, how do you go about it?
- Briefly describe the framework of your initial consultation (e.g., use of a PAR-Q and goal setting) and assessments (e.g., "needs," trigger point, flexibility, aerobic, strength, balance/mobility).
- How do you determine an individual's readiness to train for a session? Do you ever make adjustments prior to or within a training session? If so, please describe.

Additional Information

- Request a consultation, assessment, and training sessions to experience their skillset firsthand.
- Consider NOT telling them that you're a clinician.

Remember the following:

- The vetting process can be as thorough as you want it to be.
- The vetting process is YOUR job description for the trainer.
- Keep in mind there WILL be a learning curve and that safety is the priority.
- You have to decide how much of a learning curve you're willing to accept.
- Refer less challenging patients first; establish trust; refer increasingly challenging patients over time.
- Collaboration is a two-sided relationship. They'll need as much guidance as you're able to give.
- The better you speak the language of exercise science, strength and conditioning, medical fitness, and sports medicine, the better you'll be as a mentor, and the more successful this relationship.

See www.MRFInstitute.org for more information.