

Supervised Exercise Therapy Offers a Cost-Effective Solution to the Nation's Chronic Disease Crisis

New study led by Physical Activity Alliance and American Heart Association reveals health and economic benefits of community-based programs.

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WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, May 30, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As chronic disease rates and healthcare costs in the U.S. reach unsustainable levels, a new study highlights a scalable, science-backed solution: supervised exercise therapy (SET). [The study](#), published in the Translational Journal of the American College of Sports Medicine, demonstrates that SET

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programs not only improve health outcomes for adults with chronic conditions, but also offer substantial savings to the healthcare system.

Conducted by researchers from the Physical Activity Alliance (PAA), the American Heart Association (AHA), and other leading institutions, the study found that for every \$1 invested in supervised exercise therapy, there is a return on investment (ROI) of \$1.15 to \$1.70—with annual

healthcare savings per participant reaching up to \$2,834.

"We've long known how integral exercise is to overall health and well-being," said Dr. Jonathan Bonnet, MD MPH, DipABLM, FACLM, DipABOM, CAQSM, a practicing physician and clinical associate professor at Stanford University School of Medicine. "Despite this, exercise is rarely utilized as a primary clinical intervention to combat chronic disease outside of select circumstances. Part of this challenge has been the concern that it didn't make financial sense. This study showed significant cost savings and ROI utilizing supervised exercise therapy, making it both common sense and financial sense to implement."

A Growing Crisis, a Proven Solution

The U.S. spends more than \$4.5 trillion annually on healthcare, with 90% of those costs tied to

chronic and mental health conditions such as diabetes, obesity, hypertension, depression, and cancer. While physical activity is proven to prevent and manage these diseases, it remains significantly underutilized in clinical care.

Unlike cardiac or pulmonary rehabilitation—which are commonly reimbursed—most supervised exercise therapy programs for chronic conditions lack insurance coverage despite mounting evidence of their value.

“This study fills a critical gap,” said PAA President, Michael Stack. “We now have strong economic data showing that supervised exercise therapy works—not just for health outcomes, but for our bottom line as a nation. If scaled nationally to even a portion of the 133 million U.S. adults living with chronic conditions, SET programs could conservatively save the healthcare system billions of dollars each year,” Stack continued. “This doesn’t just make sense for patient care—it makes financial sense for our entire healthcare system.”

Study Highlights

- Evaluated eight U.S.-based SET programs across chronic conditions including cancer, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, anxiety/depression, and fall risk
- Demonstrated positive ROI (1.15:1 to 1.70:1) across diverse community and healthcare settings
- Reported cost savings of up to \$2,834 per participant annually through reduced healthcare utilization
- Supported broader implementation of SET in clinical care and community-based delivery models

The review underscores SET’s ability to lower hospital admissions, reduce emergency department visits, and increase quality-adjusted life years (QALYs). It also calls for standardized evaluation methods to strengthen future implementation efforts and policy development.

About the Physical Activity Alliance

The Physical Activity Alliance (PAA) is the nation’s largest coalition dedicated to advancing regular participation in physical activity. We use our collective voice to lead efforts that create, support, and advocate for the policy and systems changes necessary to empower people to enjoy physically active lives. To learn more, visit <https://paamovewithus.org>.

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