



ACE Group Fitness Instructor University Curriculum

Chapter 1: Who Is the ACE-certified Group Fitness Instructor?



Learning Objectives

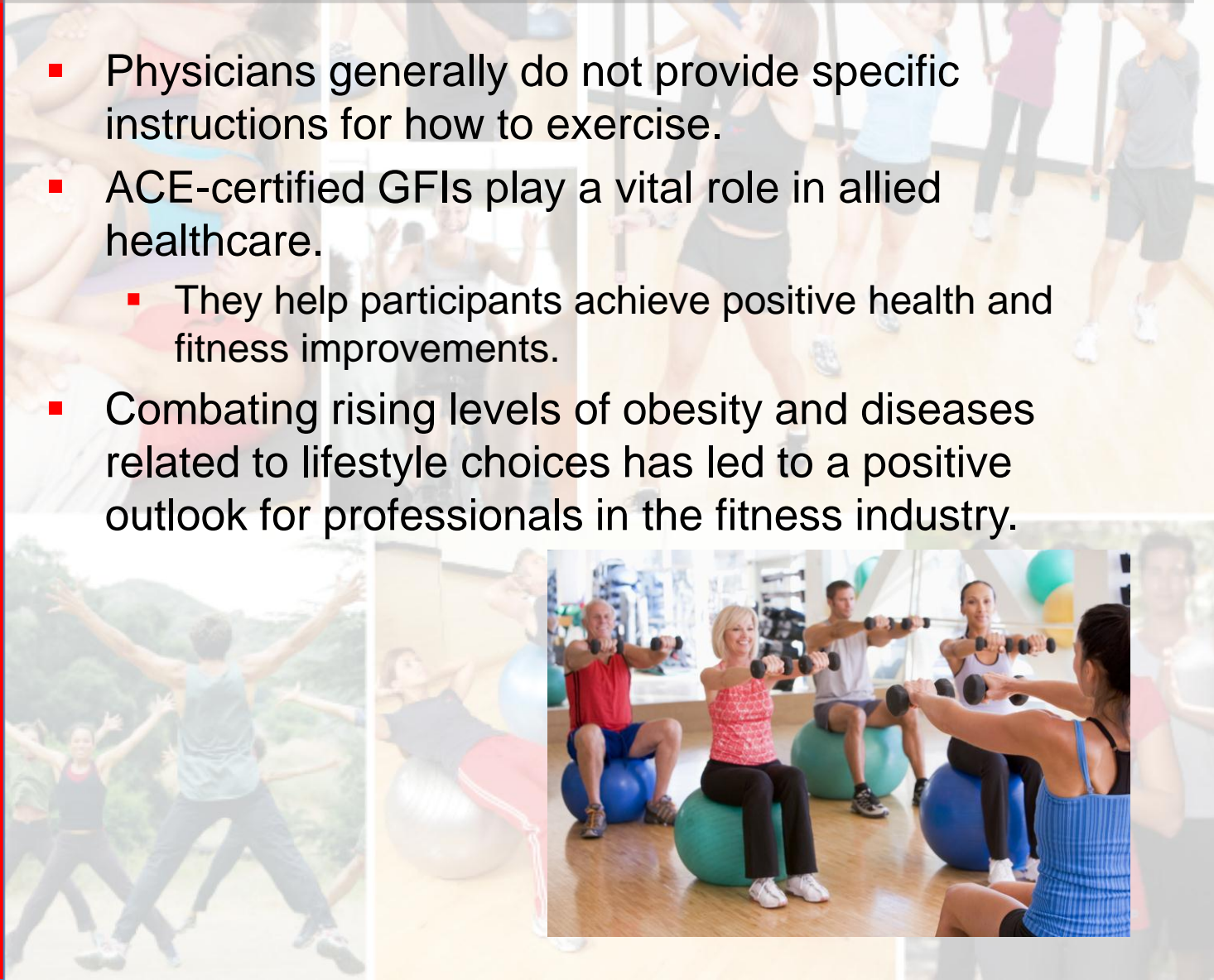
- Upon completion of this chapter, you will be able to:
 - Define the ACE-certified group fitness instructor's (GFI) scope of practice
 - List the primary concepts of the ACE Code of Ethics
 - State the duration of the GFI certification period and explain the process of renewal
 - Describe strategies to further enhance the GFI's career development

Introduction

- The human body responds to the stress of physical movement with improved fitness and health.
- *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services)
 - Regular physical activity reduces the risk of many adverse health outcomes.
 - For most health outcomes, additional benefits occur as the amount of physical activity increases.
 - Most health benefits occur with at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity physical activity, such as brisk walking.
 - Both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity are beneficial.
 - Health benefits occur across all population groups.
 - The health benefits of physical activity occur for people with disabilities.
 - The benefits of physical activity far outweigh the possibility of adverse outcomes.

Fitness Professionals Help Participants Improve Health

- Physicians generally do not provide specific instructions for how to exercise.
- ACE-certified GFIs play a vital role in allied healthcare.
 - They help participants achieve positive health and fitness improvements.
- Combating rising levels of obesity and diseases related to lifestyle choices has led to a positive outlook for professionals in the fitness industry.



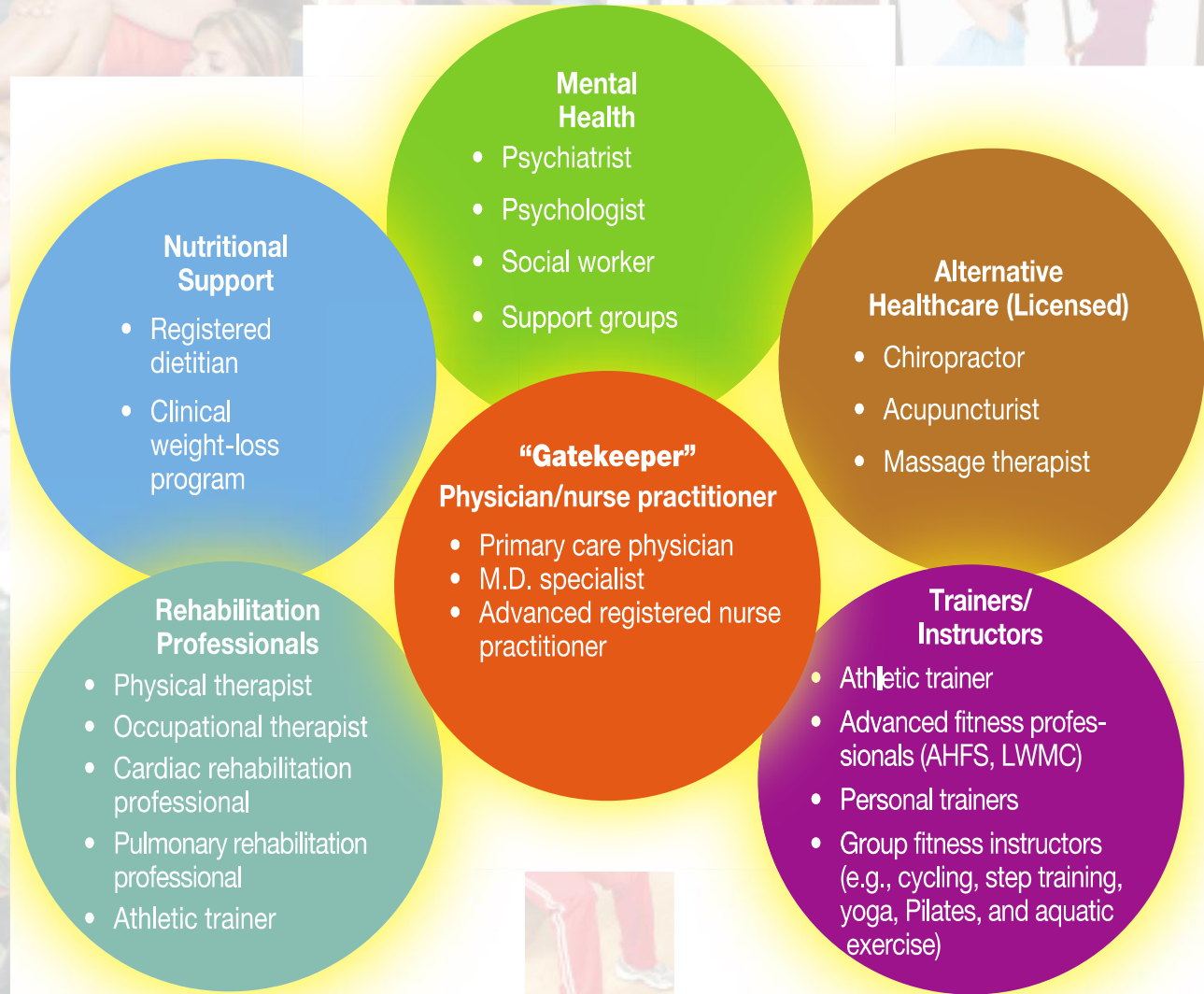
The Allied Healthcare Continuum

- The allied healthcare continuum is composed of health professionals who are credentialed through:
 - Certifications
 - Registrations
 - Licensure
- Physicians are at the top of the allied healthcare pyramid, evaluating patients to diagnose ailments and implement treatment plans, or referring patients to specialists as needed.

The Role of Fitness Professionals

- The role of fitness professionals in relation to the other members of the healthcare team is presented on the following slide.
- The GFI should obtain written permission from the participant to communicate with the referring physician.
- Even when participants do not have a physician's referral, it is important to maintain confidential records that include the participant's:
 - Program
 - Progress
 - Health-history information

Specialty Areas Within Allied Healthcare



The ACE Group Fitness Instructor Certification

- Candidates must meet or surpass a level of “minimum competency” as assessed by a competency-based evaluation (exam) to show that they are adequately qualified to work in the profession.
- The primary purpose of a certification is to protect the public from harm.
- An ACE-certified GFI has proven competence in:
 - Making safe and effective exercise-programming decisions in a variety of class situations
 - Minimizing exercise participant risk and exposure to harm

Defining “Scope of Practice”

- A scope of practice defines the:
 - Legal range of services that professionals in a given field can provide
 - Settings in which those services can be provided
 - Guidelines or parameters that must be followed
- The laws, rules, and regulations that govern a profession are established for the protection of the public.
- Fitness professionals as a collective group have a general scope of practice, as presented on the following slide.



ACE GFI General Scope of Practice

- Developing and implementing exercise programs
- Conducting pre-exercise health screens and fitness assessments
- Goal setting
- Teaching correct exercise methods and participant-monitoring techniques
- Implementing effective motivation and adherence strategies
- Educating participants about relevant topics
- Protecting participant confidentiality
 - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

Working With Other Healthcare Professionals

- A GFI should *not* make recommendations that contradict those of a participant's healthcare team.
- Each state, province, and country has specific laws about the responsibilities of different healthcare professions.
- It is the responsibility of the GFI to:
 - Learn and adhere to the laws in his or her geographical area
 - Work within the ACE-certified GFI scope of practice and adhere to the ACE Code of Ethics

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- The ACE GFI Certification is designed for fitness professionals wanting to provide general exercise leadership to apparently healthy individuals.
- The certification program is continually evaluated.
- The outline of tasks, knowledge, and skills is published as the ACE Group Fitness Instructor Exam Content Outline
 - Appendix B in the *ACE Group Fitness Instructor Manual*, 3rd ed.

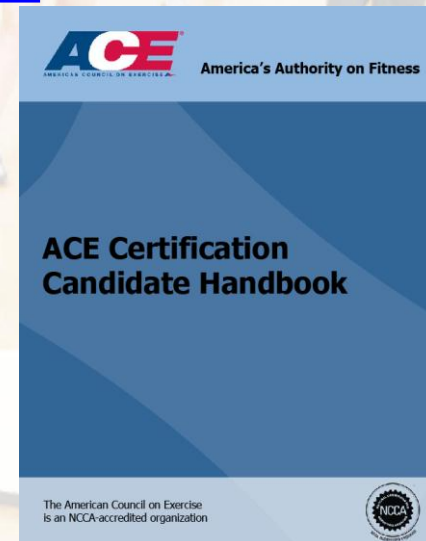


Education and Experience

- To prepare for the ACE GFI Certification Exam, candidates may choose from:
 - Preparatory courses or workshops delivered live or online
 - Educational internships
 - Professional experience
 - College courses
- Each candidate must select his or her own path based on time, financial resources, learning styles, and personal factors.
- ACE recommends three to six months of study time to adequately prepare.

Preparation and Testing

- ACE Certification Candidate Handbook
 - www.acefitness.org/getcertified/pdfs/Certification-Exam-Candidate-Handbook.pdf
- This complimentary handbook explains:
 - How ACE certification exams are developed
 - What the candidate should expect
 - The procedures for earning and maintaining an ACE certification
 - Multiple-choice and client-scenario questions found on the ACE certification exams
 - Test-taking strategies and available study resources



Professional Responsibilities and Ethics

- ACE has established a professional ethical code of conduct and disciplinary procedures.
- ACE certifications have all received third-party accreditation from the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).
- ACE has developed the ACE Code of Ethics to serve as a guide for ethical and professional practices for all ACE-certified Professionals.
 - www.acefitness.org/getcertified/certified-code.aspx
- All ACE-certified Professionals must comply with the ACE Code of Ethics.



ACE Code of Ethics

- ACE-certified Professionals will endeavor to:
 - Provide safe and effective instruction
 - Provide equal and fair treatment to all clients/participants
 - Stay up-to-date on the latest health and fitness research and understand its practical application
 - Maintain current CPR certification and knowledge of first-aid services
 - Comply with all applicable business, employment, and intellectual property laws
 - Maintain the confidentiality of all client/participant information
 - Refer clients/participants to more qualified health or medical professionals when appropriate
 - Uphold and enhance public appreciation and trust for the health and fitness industry
 - Establish and maintain clear professional boundaries

Professional Practices and Disciplinary Procedures

- ACE may revoke or otherwise take action with regard to the application or certification of an individual in the case of:
 - Ineligibility for certification
 - Irregularity in connection with any certification examination
 - Unauthorized possession, use, access, or distribution of confidential or proprietary ACE documents or materials
 - Material misrepresentation or fraud in any statement to ACE or to the public
- Any physical, mental, or emotional condition that impairs competent and objective professional performance
- Negligent and/or intentional misconduct in professional work
- The timely conviction, plea of guilty, or plea of *nolo contendere* (“no contest”) in connection with a felony or misdemeanor that is directly related to public health and/or fitness instruction or education
- Failure to meet the requirements for certification or recertification

Disciplinary Process

- ACE has developed a three-tiered disciplinary process.
- The process consists of review, hearing, and appeals to ensure fair and unbiased examination of alleged violation(s) of the Application and Certification Standards in order to:
 - Determine the merit of allegations
 - Impose appropriate sanctions as necessary to protect the public and the integrity of the certification process



Certification Period and Renewal

- ACE certifications are valid for two years from the date earned.
- To renew, ACE-certified Professionals must:
 - Complete a minimum of 20 hours of continuing education credits (2.0 CECs)
 - Maintain a current certificate in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and, if living in North America, automated external defibrillation (AED)
- Certified professionals should complete additional continuing education.
- The ramifications for allowing an ACE certification to expire include:
 - Not being able to advertise the fact that they hold the ACE certification until it is renewed
 - Discontinued professional liability insurance
 - Loss of employment

Participant Privacy

- Participants will share confidential information with the GFI.
- To help prevent violations of participant privacy, ACE-certified Professionals should adhere to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).
 - Following HIPAA regulations can help maintain the confidentiality of each client's protected health information.



Referral

- GFIs must refer participants who require services outside their scope of practice.
- Proper referral ensures that participants are provided with appropriate care from qualified providers.
- Referrals can also come to the GFI from other health professionals.



Developing a Referral Network

- GFIs should identify allied health professionals who are reputable.
- Potential referral sources include:
 - Mind/body instructors
 - Smoking-cessation programs
 - Aquatic exercise programs
 - Support groups
 - Massage therapists
- Research potential referrals before recommending any programs or services to a participant.
- With proper networking, the GFI may also gain referrals from the other health and fitness professionals within the network.



Safety

- All fitness professionals should do what they can to minimize risk for everyone in the fitness facility, including:
 - Proper equipment maintenance and storage
 - Ensuring appropriate cleanliness of the facility
 - Understanding emergency procedures
 - Conducting a health-history assessment
 - Determining appropriate levels of intensity for initial exercise program design
 - Helping clients perform exercises in a safe and effective manner with proper progressions
- Even with the best risk-management program, injuries and incidents can still occur.
 - As such, ACE recommends that all ACE-certified Professionals carry professional liability insurance.

Supplements

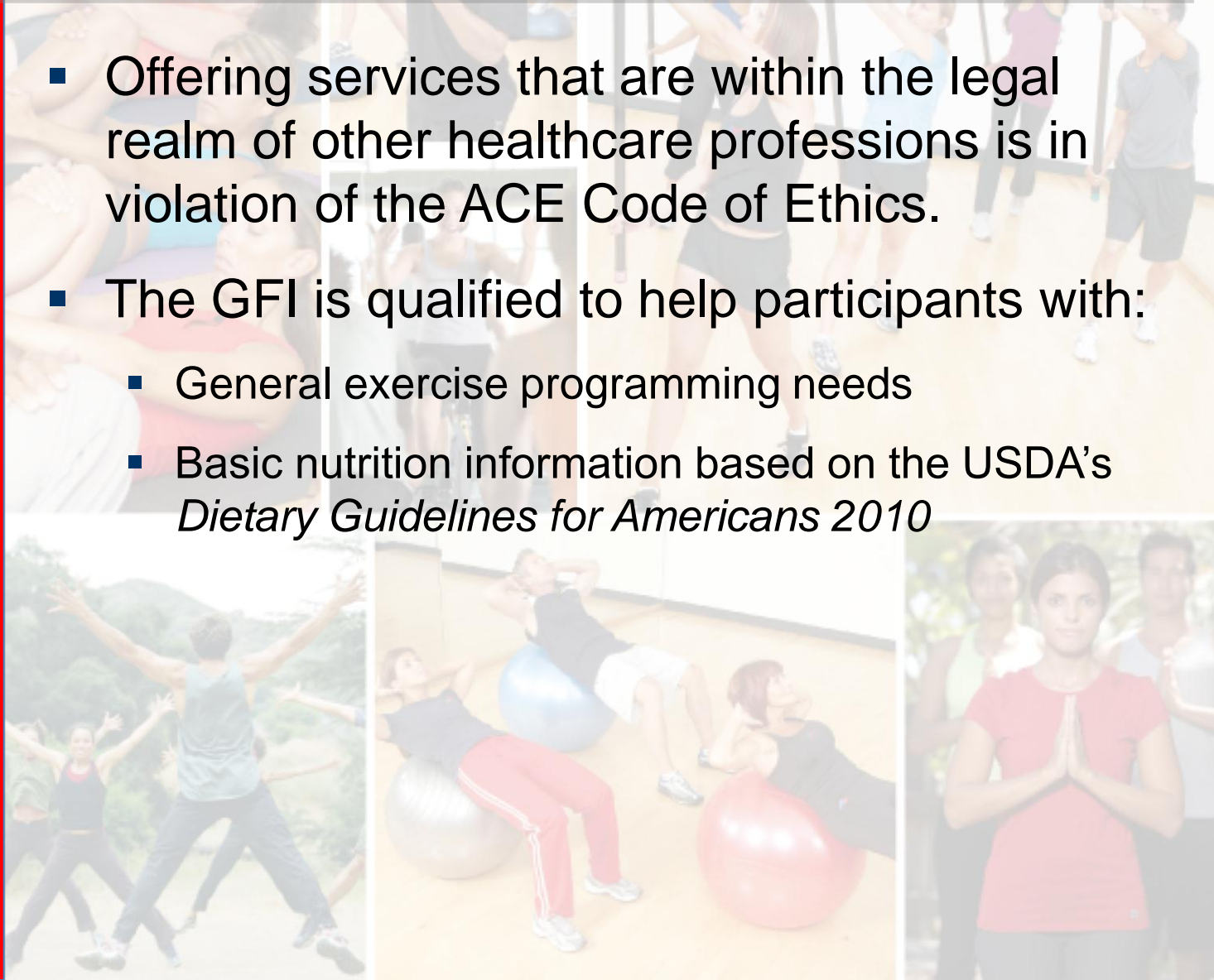
- Supplements are not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
- It is not illegal for fitness facilities to sell commercial nutritional supplements.
 - However, it is irresponsible for them to provide supplement recommendations without the appropriate staff to give such advice.
- GFIs are not qualified to recommend supplements to clients.
 - Unless a GFI is also a registered dietitian or a physician, he or she does not have the expertise or legal qualifications necessary to recommend supplements.

Educating Participants About Supplements

- GFIs should educate themselves about supplements.
- The GFI should help the participant understand that:
 - Fitness goals can be reached without supplements
 - Supplements can have negative and potentially harmful side effects
- Some participants insist on using dietary supplements.
 - The GFI should refer the participant to a qualified physician or registered dietitian for guidance.

Ramifications of Offering Inappropriate Services

- Offering services that are within the legal realm of other healthcare professions is in violation of the ACE Code of Ethics.
- The GFI is qualified to help participants with:
 - General exercise programming needs
 - Basic nutrition information based on the USDA's *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010*



Accreditation of Allied Healthcare Credentials

- The acceptance of fitness professionals as legitimate members of the allied healthcare team has been lacking.
- As a result, ACE has earned third-party accreditation from the NCCA for its fitness certification programs.
- The NCCA has reviewed and accredited the certification programs for most professions within allied healthcare.



Recognition From the Fitness and Health Industry

- NCCA accreditation is recognized as the third-party standard for accreditation of certifications for GFIs.
- NCCA accreditation is also recognized by the following fitness industry professional trade organizations:
 - The Medical Fitness Association (MFA)
 - The International Health, Racquet, and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA)
- Requirements for hiring fitness professionals that recognize the NCCA accreditation are being developed.

Recognition From the Education Community

- The ACE GFI college curriculum:
 - Helps instructors with course design
 - Provides discounts on the study materials for students
 - Helps exercise science departments meet one of the primary outcome assessments stated in the *Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs for Personal Fitness Training* from the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs

Recognition From the Department of Labor

- The Department of Labor (DOL) reports that most organizations encourage GFIs to obtain certification in the fitness field and many require it to gain employment.
- ACE is specifically identified by the DOL as offering quality certifications for GFIs.



Career Development

- A GFI who wants full-time employment in fitness should have a general idea of his or her career path.
- Career paths are guidelines to help the professional reach certain career goals.
- A career plan can help a professional determine if a continuing education offering is in line with his or her goals.
 - A career plan can be used as a template for researching and selecting continuing education to work toward a GFI's goals.

Continuing Education

- Completing continuing education in one or more areas of focus can advance a GFI's career.
- Factors to consider when selecting continuing education courses include:
 - Checking if the course will be at the appropriate level
 - Seeing if the instructor has the appropriate qualifications to teach the course
 - Learning if the course is ACE-approved or will have to be petitioned for continuing education credits (CECs)
 - Determining if the education provided is within the scope of practice

Specialization

- Specialization is a way to become recognized as an “expert” for a particular type of exercise or client population.
- Areas of specialization should be selected based on a GFI’s:
 - Desired career path
 - Interests
 - Participant base
- The area of specialization should:
 - Fall within the scope of practice
 - Provide the GFI with knowledge that is complementary to what he or she does within the scope of practice



Additional Fitness Certifications

- ACE encourages fitness professionals to earn certifications that provide them with new areas of expertise.
- For example:
 - GFIs can benefit from ACE's Personal Trainer certification.
 - Fitness professionals can benefit from ACE's Lifestyle & Weight Management Coach (LWMC) certification.
 - Advanced or experienced fitness professionals can benefit from ACE's Advanced Health & Fitness Specialist (AHFS) certification.

New Areas of Expertise Within Allied Healthcare

- A GFI who wants to expand his or her services must earn the appropriate credentials.
- This could include:
 - Becoming a licensed massage therapist
 - Earning a nutrition degree and becoming a registered dietitian
 - Earning a master's degree in physical therapy and becoming a licensed physical therapist
 - Going to medical school and becoming a medical doctor
- In all of these situations, the GFI can become an advocate for exercise in his or her new professional arena.

Summary

- Many of the professions in healthcare are devoted to *treating* disease, while a GFI primarily helps people *avoid* disease.
- The role that ACE-certified GFIs play in the healthcare continuum has never been more important.
- This chapter covered:
 - The allied healthcare continuum
 - The ACE GFI Certification
 - Accreditation of allied healthcare credentials through the NCCA
 - Career development