

# Narrowing the gap

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## NARROWING THE GAP: HOW TO INCREASE FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN SPORT SCIENCE

The impacts of COVID-19 have been far and wide, and have been felt more by women and girls in most industries. Sport has not been spared with girls dropping out of sport at higher rates than boys<sup>1</sup> and women and non-binary individuals being under-represented in broadcasting,<sup>2</sup> management<sup>3</sup> and sport science<sup>4</sup> (although we know those are not new issues!).

When we think of levelling the playing field in sports, we often think first of the bias against women's sports in the media and the imbalance in funding women's sports. In fact, less than 4% of media coverage is on female athletes.<sup>5</sup> Since 2020, less girls are participating and staying involved in sport.<sup>1</sup>

When we think of women in sports, we tend to think of the lack of representation of women and non-binary individuals in healthcare roles working with a professional sports team, a disappointing trend for professions that are traditionally female dominated. Female-specific sport science research is also lacking as most research has typically been conducted on young, white, college-aged cis-gendered males.<sup>6</sup> Women are also under-represented in leading authorship and editorial board positions in the sport sciences.<sup>7</sup>

In this issue, we are proud to bring you 'See hear and empower women: It is time to walk the walk to eliminate MANELS in sport and exercise medicine and physiotherapy.' (see page 251). The 'manel' (an all-male panel) in sport and exercise medicine/physiotherapy is a powerful and visible symbol of gender inequality. This article shows us how deliberate and thoughtful planning can overcome barriers to speaker gender equity by providing examples of intentional strategies that relate to women and other



equity-deserving groups. More women speakers are needed at our conferences!

## NARROWING THE GAP: KEEPING KIDS ACTIVE AND HEALTHY

Children and youth are spending less time outdoors, are more sedentary, sleep more, and spend more time on screen-based activities compared with pre-COVID-19.<sup>8</sup> As physiotherapists, we can play a pivotal role in promoting community-based physical activity and increasing children's functional abilities to help them thrive on and off the field. In this issue, we bring you two European studies designed to help us better understand how to track and improve physical activity in children and adolescents.

'European Fitness Landscape in Children and Adolescents' (see page 256) developed reference values for health-related fitness in European children and adolescents. This study reports on the implications of fitness testing through an interactive web-based, open-access and multilanguage platform. Many schools here in Canada conduct fitness testing as part of the physical education curriculum but this study goes further by discussing how testing results could be integrated into the healthcare systems across Europe.

'The TransformUs! cluster RCT 18 and 30-month effects on children's physical activity sedentary time and cardiometabolic risk markers' (see page 311) study reports on the efficacy of the

Transform-Us! school-based and home-based intervention on children's physical activity, sedentary behaviour and cardiometabolic risk factors. We found it interesting that the interventions in this study showed 'promise for reducing children's sedentary behaviours and adiposity indicators; but that achieving substantial increases in physical activity remained challenging.'

## NARROWING THE GAP: PARA AND NON-PARA SPORT

Para athletes encounter many barriers when trying to participate in sport. These include lack of knowledge in para sport, difficulties in finding local para sport programmes, lack of accessibility to equipment and adapted training facilities, and a lack of social supports. But once athletes enter the world of sport, they are also often faced with coaches and an integrated support team that lack knowledge in the specifics of their sport. Nancy Quinn has spent much of her career ensuring Canadian para athletes receive the best care to help them reach their peak performance capabilities. Read up on the evolution of this pioneer para sport physiotherapist in this issue's Service Spotlight (see page 320).

## NARROWING THE GAP: KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION WITHOUT BORDERS

Last year, we reported that Sport Physiotherapy Canada had worked tirelessly for 2 years to develop its new Core Competencies courses. We are happy to report that we are launching our third round of registration this winter and that we have reached our goal of decreasing barriers to access to information and mentorship. We are excited to start planning the translation of our courses to French and will soon be launching registrations to the international healthcare community through a partnership with the International Federation of Sports Physical Therapy. We can't wait to host you virtually!

**Twitter** Christopher Napier @runnerphysio

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