

EQUIVITA: How We Got Here

by Adam Milligan, EQUIVITA

My work in the fitness industry began in 1993. I had just left the University of Cincinnati with the intention of starting at the Ohio State University and working towards a health care or medical degree. In that same year, I also started working in a Physical Therapy clinic. These two jobs, one with a fitness facility and the other with a clinic, provided a unique set of experiences.

The mixture of these experiences was likely the catalyst that surfaced what I now call Transitional Fitness.

First: I knew I wanted to help people with their health, but I was struggling to find a career in healthcare that offered, and maintained over time, the style of hands-on care I was looking for.

Second: Patients that were treated in Physical Therapy often returned for the same condition, which seemed, in part, to relate to patients discharged into a fitness industry that wasn't ready to work with them.

Thus third: I noticed a trend in the fitness industry to look at each body in the same way and apply the same "balanced program". I didn't feel this approach was effective at adapting to an individual's body's needs, 'adaptation' which is critical to the success of the body's successful transition from rehab exercises to a full fitness program.

For me, the contrasts between medicine and fitness revealed a need for a bridge: a program or approach that would provide a smooth transition from Physical Therapy to fitness. With this focus I returned to school and completed a Bachelors Degree at Ohio State University in Exercise Science. Concurrently, I began researching and designing a Post-Rehab Fitness Program for the hospital at which I was working.

After graduation, and after trying many different health care organizations, I realized that to truly bridge the two fields, the Transitional Fitness Model would have to be established on its own. So, in the fall of 2000 I started setting up BodyByMe as the first Transitional Fitness business. The BodyByMe plan was designed solely to work with patients discharged from Physical Therapy and transition them to general fitness.

I carefully constructed the fitness assessment tool--a comprehensive system of questions and assessments that decipher a person's biomechanical readiness to participate in an exercise program—which served as the core of all plan design. It accomplished two key goals:

- the ability to create the most effective exercise plan, whatever the goal, and
- an invaluable tool for educating people about their body.

This model proved very successful and within a couple years the business had grown through a strong network of word-of-mouth referrals.



EQUIVITA: How We Got Here (continued)

In the summer of 2003 it became obvious that we had outgrown our first location and we started to look for a space that would reduce the common hindrances to fitness and incorporate more Massage Therapy into our practice. The space we established is named EQUIVITA. It has massage rooms, bathrooms with showers, a café and, of course, a fitness area.

Our steady growth over the years came primarily from client referrals and soon we again found ourselves at the point of needing more space.

In late 2006, we were given the opportunity to stay at our current location and expand to over double our size. Given our history of growth I knew this was the right move, but I also wanted to add some other things to make EQUIVITA even more holistic.

So, in addition to expanding the fitness area, we built an entirely separate section for massage therapy and a classroom that we use for our growing educational courses and a variety of movement classes.

Now the Transitional Fitness Model has grown beyond just the bridge between medicine and fitness into a full scale Fitness and Massage Therapy Practice: EQUIVITA.

