2027 ACSM Worldwide Fitness Trends

Future Directions of the Health and Fitness Industry

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Apply It!

- Identify the 2027 fitness trends ranked by professionals across health and fitness sectors.
- Use the top fitness trends of 2027 to inform programming, services, continuing education, research, and strategic decision-making.
- Consider international differences in fitness trend rankings for 2027.

Key words: Exercise Professionals, Fitness Trends, Strength Training, Survey, Wearable Technology

INTRODUCTION

For more than two decades, ACSM's Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends has gathered input from exercise professionals worldwide to identify trends expected to influence practice in the year ahead. The survey has reflected how health and fitness priorities have changed, from childhood obesity and wearable technology to medical fitness, active aging, and hybrid programming. In 2026, exercise professionals continued to respond to heightened public attention to weight management, including the growing use of obesity management medications, alongside sustained interest in social connection, mental well-being, and healthy aging.



These priorities reinforced demand for exercise programs that support prevention, physical function, and long-term behavior change. Digital technologies also sustained relevance, becoming increasingly important to how exercise professionals track, interpret, and discuss clients' physical activity, sleep, recovery, and health behaviors.

The 2027 ACSM Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends builds on this context by capturing exercise professionals' perspectives on the trends influencing their day-to-day practice around the globe. This article provides practical context for interpreting and applying the survey findings to inform programming, services, research initiatives, and strategic decision-making.

METHODS

Since 2022, ACSM has appointed a cross-disciplinary workgroup to review and refine survey items (*i.e.*, individual trends) annually. Each year, trends are added, revised, or retired based on relevant published literature, input from the expert workgroup, and applicability to exercise professional practice. The 2027 survey included 50 potential fitness trends across nine categories, with open-ended comment fields for each category. Figure 1 presents the categories and highest-ranked trend within each category. The definition of a fitness trend is provided in the Sidebar.

Sidebar. How ACSM's Trends Workgroup Defines Fitness Trends versus Fads

TREND: A fitness trend is a widely adopted and/or sustained pattern in health and fitness participation, professional practice, or industry offerings. Unlike fads, trends persist beyond temporary enthusiasm and demonstrate measurable engagement, market presence, or long-term impact.

The survey informing the 2027 ACSM Trends report was distributed online via Qualtrics through ACSM's member and stakeholder communication channels, including email communications, conferences, and social media platforms, between April and May 2026. Respondents rated each potential fitness trend on a 10-point Likert-type scale, from 1 ("definitely not a trend") to 10 ("definitely a trend"). They were instructed to rate each item independently based on how widely the trend was observed in the health and fitness industry, rather than personal preference, perceived effectiveness, or health benefits. Respondents who completed the survey could enter a drawing for one $100 Mastercard® gift card or one of ten free ACSM books.

A total of 1,709 responses were collected from the U.S.-based version of the survey. To support data quality, responses were excluded if respondents did not provide ratings for any trend items, completed the entire survey in less than 60 seconds (suggesting insufficient time to meaningfully evaluate the 50 potential trends), or were identified as duplicate submissions. After these exclusions, the final sample included 1,433 valid responses (83.9% of original submissions).

Trend results were determined by rank-ordering mean scores across valid responses. The highest-ranked trends are presented using three sections: About, Survey performance, and Application. Selected results also are presented by professional role, work setting, and years of experience in Figures 2–4 to highlight patterns across contexts.

Figure 1. 2027 trends by category.

2027 Trends by Category

Survey Category	Trends Included in Category	Top-Ranked Trend
Exercise Setting	Budget-Friendly Gyms; Commercial/Multi-Purpose Gyms; Fitness at Home; Medical Fitness Centers; Outdoor Fitness Activities; Specialized Fitness Studios (Boutiques)	Outdoor Fitness Activities
Structured Exercise	Adult Recreation and Sport Clubs; Competitive Fitness Events; Group Fitness Classes; Personal Training (Face-to-Face, Online, or Hybrid); Small Group Training	Group Fitness Classes
Fitness Business Model	Employer-Sponsored Fitness Programs; Employing Certified Exercise Professionals; Fitness Reimbursement Programs; Flexible Memberships and Pricing Models; Influencer/Ambassador-led Fitness Programs	Influencer/Ambassador-led Fitness Programs
Exercise Prescription for Clinical Populations	Exercise Oncology; Exercise for Chronic Disease Management; Exercise for Neuro-degenerative Diseases; Adaptive Fitness and Inclusive Training	Exercise for Chronic Disease Management
Exercise Prescription for Healthy Populations with Special Considera-tions	Body-Inclusive Fitness; Fitness Programs for Neurodivergent Individuals; Fitness Programs for Older Adults; Health and Wellness Coaching; Prenatal and Postnatal Fitness; Youth Athletic Development; Youth Physical Activity Promotion	Fitness Programs for Older Adults
Training Modalities	Balance, Flow, and Core Strength; Body Weight Training; Circuit Training; Functional Fitness Training (FFT); High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT); Low-Impact/Joint-Friendly Training; Mobility Training; Olympic-Style Weightlifting; Traditional Strength Training	Balance, Flow, and Core Strength
Digital Technologies	Artificial Intelligence in Fitness; Data-driven Training Technology; Mobile Exercise Apps; Wearable Technology	Wearable Technology
Exercise Programming	Exercise Is Medicine®; Exercise for Mental Health and Well-Being; Exercise for Weight Management; Hormonal Health and Fitness; Lifestyle Medicine	Exercise for Weight Management
Recovery-Based Therapies	Blood Flow Restriction Training; Hot and Cold Therapies (Thermal Therapies); Light Therapy; Massage, Vibration, and Compression; Neuroregulation and Recovery	Hot and Cold Therapies (Thermal Therapies)

Figure 2. Top three fitness trends across professional roles for 2027.

Professional Role	Top Three Trends										
	Wearable Technology	Fitness Programs for Older Adults	Mobile Exercise Apps	Balance, Flow, and Core Strength	Traditional Strength Training	Data-driven Training Technology	Exercise for Mental Health and Well-Being	Influencer/Ambassador-led Fitness Programs	Personal Training (Face-to-Face, Online, or Hybrid)	Exercise for Weight Management	High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)
Athletic Trainer	1					2		3			
Exercise Physiologist / Clinical Exercise Physiologist	1	2	3								
Group Exercise Instructor	1	2		3							
Health / Wellness Coach	1	2					3				
Medical Professional (MD/DO, RN, Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist)	1		2	3							
Owner	1	2							3		
Personal Trainer (part-time or full-time)	1	2			3						
Program Manager / Director / Facility Operator	1	2			3						
Recreation Professional (Community, Municipal, Parks & Recreation; Non-collegiate)	2	1		3							
Registered Dietitian (RD, RDN, LD)	1									2	3
Strength Coach	1		3		2						
Student (undergraduate or graduate)	1		3	2							
University Faculty (Educator, Lecturer, Research Faculty, Professor)	1	3	2								
University Staff (Campus Recreation, Fitness, or Wellness Services)	1			2	3						

Note. Cells indicate trends ranked among the top three within each professional role. Darker shading indicates a higher rank. Blank cells indicate that the trend was not ranked in the top three for that role.

Figure 3. Top three fitness trends across work settings for 2027.

Work Setting	Top Three Trends										
	Wearable Technology	Fitness Programs for Older Adults	Mobile Exercise Apps	Balance, Flow, and Core Strength	Traditional Strength Training	Data-driven Training Technology	Influencer/ Ambassador-led Fitness Programs	Exercise for Weight Management	Competitive Fitness Events	Specialized Fitness Studios (Boutiques)	Functional Fitness Training (FFT)
Athletics Department / Strength & Conditioning Program	1		3						2		
Boutique Studio (Yoga, Pilates, Cycling, HIIT)	1			3						2	
Campus Recreation / Wellness Center	1			3	2						
College or University (Teaching or Research Faculty)	1		2			3					
Commercial Fitness Center	1			2	3						
Community-Based Facility or Program (YMCA, JCC, Parks & Recreation)	2	1		3							
Corporate Wellness / Worksite Wellness	1	2			3						
Hospital / Medical Fitness Center / Program	1		2	3							
Military, Government, or Public Safety Fitness Program	1							3			2
Online Fitness / Coaching (employee or contractor)	1	3	2								
Private Practice / Own Business	1	2	3								
Rehabilitation or Outpatient Clinic (Non-hospital)	1			2	3						
Sports Performance Facility	1			2			3				

Note. Cells indicate trends ranked among the top three within each work setting. Darker shading indicates a higher rank. Blank cells indicate that the trend was not ranked in the top three for that work setting.

Figure 4. Top three fitness trends across years of experience for 2027.

Years of Experience	Top Three Trends						
	Wearable Technology	Traditional Strength Training	Influencer/ Ambassador-led Fitness Programs	Balance, Flow, and Core Strength	Mobile Exercise Apps	Group Fitness Classes	Fitness Programs for Older Adults
Less than 1 year	1	2	3				
1 to 3 years	1			2	3		
4 to 6 years	1			2	3		
7 to 9 years	1	3				2	
10 to 20 years	1				2		3
21 or more years	1				3		2

Note. Cells indicate trends ranked among the top three within each years-of-experience category. Darker shading indicates a higher rank. Blank cells indicate that the trend was not ranked in the top three for that years-of-experience category.

ACSM TRENDS SURVEY RESULTS

Respondent characteristics are shown in Tables 1 and 2. Respondents had a mean age of 46.2 years (range = 19–83 years), and the most commonly reported education level was a master's/specialist degree (26.9%). Exercise physiologists/clinical exercise physiologists, personal trainers, and group exercise instructors were the top three categories of professional roles reported, and respondents most often worked in these settings: college/university, hospital/medical fitness center, or private practice/own business settings. Table 3 lists the top 20 trends for 2027 and Supplemental Table 1, https://links.lww.com/FIT/A479 provides a full historical trends list.

TABLE 1: 2027 Survey Respondent Demographics

Category	Response	n	Percent
Age (years; mean 46.2; range = 19–83)	<25	68	4.7
	25–34	195	13.6
	35–44	235	16.4
	45–54	191	13.3
	55–64	197	13.7
	65+	140	9.8
Gender	Female	679	47.4
	Male	333	23.2
	Nonbinary/Other	17	1.2
Education	High school diploma	66	4.6
	Bachelor's degree	320	22.3
	Master's/Specialist degree	385	26.9
	Doctoral/Terminal degree	253	17.7
Certification status	Certified by ACSM	717	50
	Certified by another organization	392	27.4
	Not currently certified	164	11.4

Percentages were calculated using the full analytic sample as the denominator (N = 1,433); therefore, category percentages may not sum to 100% when responses were missing. Certification categories were not mutually exclusive.

TABLE 2: Respondents' Professional Roles, Work Settings, and Experience

Category	Response	Percent
Professional role	Exercise physiologist/Clinical exercise physiologist	30.1
	Personal trainer	24.6
	Group exercise instructor	17.4
	Educator/lecturer	16.9
	Research faculty/professor	16.9
	Health/wellness coach	10.7
	Program manager/facility operator	9.3
	Student (undergraduate or graduate)	7.4
	Strength/sport performance coach	5.7
	Medical professional	5.6
	Owner	5.4
	Athletic trainer	3.3
	Registered dietitian	1.1
Work status	Full-time	45.8
	Part-time	18.4
	Certified but not currently working as an exercise professional	7.3

(Continued)

TABLE 2: Continued

Category	Response	Percent
Work setting	College/University (faculty)	19.6
	Hospital/Medical fitness center	17.9
	Private practice/own business	14.6
	Community-based facility	8.2
	Boutique studio	6.9
	Online fitness/coaching	6.6
	Commercial fitness center	6.4
	Campus recreation/wellness center	4.8
	Corporate/employee wellness	4.7
	Rehabilitation/outpatient clinic	4.6
	Athletics/sports performance	4.5
	Military/government/public safety	2.2
Years of experience	Less than 1 year	3.5
	1–3 years	6.1
	4–6 years	7.5
	7–9 years	5.7
	10–20 years	20.5
	21 or more years	28.1

Percentages were calculated using the full analytic sample as the denominator (N = 1,433); therefore, category percentages may not sum to 100% when responses were missing. Professional role and work setting categories were not mutually exclusive.

1. Trend Name: Wearable Technology

About: This trend includes devices such as fitness trackers, smartwatches, heart rate monitors, GPS trackers, and other wearable sensors that monitor health, fitness, and performance data in real time. Common metrics include heart rate, steps, speed, sedentary time, distance, sleep, recovery, and physical activity. Advanced biosensors also may capture indicators such as heart rhythm, skin temperature, blood pressure, or fall and vehicular crash detection. As wearables continuously evolve in form, sensor capabilities, and data-processing algorithms, researchers continue to expand available metrics and refine their validity and reliability across devices and populations (1).

Survey performance: Since its introduction to the survey in 2016, this trend has ranked in the top three every year and has held the No. 1 position 10 times. In 2027, *Wearable Technology* was the only trend to appear in the top three across every professional role, work setting, and years-of-experience category shown in this report, demonstrating its broad recognition across the health and fitness field.

Application: Exercise professionals can use wearable data to support conversations about behavior change, exercise intensity, recovery, and progress. By recognizing device validation and limitations, professionals can help clients identify patterns, set realistic goals, and use wearable feedback to guide individualized programming. Exercise professionals also can help clients prioritize meaningful metrics and avoid overinterpreting estimates that vary in accuracy across devices and outcomes (1).

2. Trend Name: Mobile Exercise Apps

About: This trend includes digital platforms that allow consumers to access on-demand, live-streamed, or prerecorded fitness classes and workouts at their convenience. In 2025, an estimated 540 million people across the globe used mobile fitness apps, generating about $3.4 billion in revenue (2). This growth is likely fueled by integration with wearable technology like smartwatches, which allow users to join digital communities and track real-time health and physical activity data.

Survey performance: In 2027, *Mobile Exercise Apps* moved up from No. 4 in 2026 and returned to the No. 2 position held in 2025. This trend has appeared in the top 20 every year since 2022, when it was introduced.

Application: Exercise apps can provide interactive and increasingly AI-driven workout experiences. These tools may support exercise adherence by lowering entry barriers and providing immediate programming structure (3).

TABLE 3: Fitness Professionals' Top 20 Ranked Fitness Trends for 2027

2027 Rank	Trend	5-Year Trend History
1	Wearable technology	✓
2	Mobile exercise apps	✓
3	Balance, flow, and core strength	
4	Fitness programs for older adults	✓
5	Traditional strength training	✓
6	Exercise for weight management	✓
7	Group fitness classes	
8	Data-driven training technology	
9	Exercise for mental health and well-being	
10	Influencer/ambassador-led fitness programs	
11	Hot and cold therapies (thermal therapies)	
12	High-intensity interval training (HIIT)	✓
13	Functional fitness training	✓
14	Personal training	
15	Competitive fitness events	★
16	Massage, vibration, and compression	★
17	Adult recreation and sport clubs	
18	Outdoor fitness activities	✓
19	Youth athletic development	
20	Fitness at home	

✓ = Stable trend, appeared on the top 20 list every year from 2023–2027.
★ = New survey item for 2027.

Exercise professionals can use these apps as supplemental tools to extend support beyond sessions, particularly for clients seeking flexible, technology-enabled fitness options, while selecting apps based on clients' goals, preferences, access, and ability level.



3. Trend Name: Balance, Flow, and Core Strength

About: This trend encompasses modalities such as yoga, Pilates, barre, and mobility-focused training that enhance stability, mobility, flexibility, muscular endurance, coordination, and control. These formats also support movement quality, functional performance, and overall fitness.

Survey performance: *Balance, Flow, and Core Strength* moved up two spots from 2026 and ranked among the top three trends for group exercise instructors, medical professionals, recreation professionals, students, and university staff categories. Respondents with less experience in the field, particularly those with 1–3 years and 4–6 years of experience, tended to score it higher than those with 7 or more years in the field.

Application: The rise in this trend mirrors recent industry data, which reports year-over-year booking growth of 66% for Pilates and 28% for yoga (4). Balance is highlighted in the U.S. Physical Activity Guidelines as a key component of well-rounded exercise programming, bridging movement quality with physical function (5). These formats can be adapted to different ability levels and goals, and exercise professionals can emphasize benefits such as improved movement control, functional performance, and confidence to broaden appeal across diverse client populations.

4. Trend Name: Fitness Programs for Older Adults

About: These programs cater to adults 65 years and older and are designed to improve health-related quality of life, functional capacity, and independent living.

Survey performance: The 2027 results mark the fifth consecutive year in which *Fitness Programs for Older Adults* ranked among the top five trends overall, reflecting sustained prominence. It also was the only trend besides *Wearable Technology* to rank No. 1 within a work setting, with respondents in community-based facilities or programs (*e.g.*, YMCA, JCC, and Parks and Recreation) ranking it No. 1 overall.

Application: ACSM's position stand titled "Exercise and Physical Activity for Older Adults," (2009) summarizes the importance of engaging in physical activity in the later years of life (6). Nearly 20 years later, exercise professionals continue to recognize the need for evidence-based programs for this growing population. Between 2010 and 2020, the U.S. population aged 65 years and older increased by approximately 15.5 million (7). To best serve this population, practitioners must apply behavior-change and exercise programming principles that promote functional independence, reduce disability risk, and support overall well-being (8). Check out the 2025 themed issue on power in older adults: https://www.ovid.com/jnls/acsm-healthfitness/toc/2025/09000 to continue to learn more about this trend.

5. Trend Name: Traditional Strength Training

About: This trend includes resistance training that emphasizes proper movement mechanics, lifting technique, and structured progression to develop muscular fitness. It incorporates equipment such as barbells, dumbbells, kettlebells, and resistance bands to improve strength, endurance, and movement efficiency.

Survey performance: In 2027, this trend moved up two spots from No. 7 in 2026. It also ranked among the top three trends for several professional roles (Figure 2; personal trainers, program managers/facility operators, strength/sport performance coaches, and university staff) and work settings (Figure 3; campus recreation/wellness centers, commercial fitness centers, corporate/employee wellness, and rehabilitation/outpatient clinics). Internationally, it ranked among the top three in just under half (43.8%) of participating regions, demonstrating broad global relevance.

Application: In 2026, ACSM's position stand, "Resistance Training Prescription for Muscle Function, Hypertrophy, and Physical Performance in Healthy Adults: An Overview of Reviews," (9) was released, highlighting consistency as the most important consideration for achieving results with patients and clients. Although strength training is well established, its continued prominence reinforces the need for individualized programming and professional guidance. Exercise professionals should tailor sets, repetitions, intensity, and progression to each client's goals, preferences, training history, and ability level.

6. Trend Name: Exercise for Weight Management

About: This trend includes programming designed to support intentional weight loss, weight gain, or weight maintenance. These exercise programs may integrate nutritional guidance, behavior-change strategies, or medical interventions, such as obesity management medications, to optimize muscle health, strength, and physical functioning.

Survey performance: This trend moved down three spots from No. 3 in 2026. Still, it ranked among the top three trends for registered dietitians and respondents in military/government/public safety programs (Figures 2 and 3). Internationally, it ranked among the top three trends in China, Mexico, and Turkey.

Application: Projections estimate that adult obesity prevalence in the U.S. could reach approximately 47% by 2035 (10). A 2025 article in *Current Sports Medicine Reports* states, "the inclusion of exercise in the treatment of patients with obesity who are prescribed an obesity management medication should be primarily focused on the health benefits beyond weight loss…" (11). ACSM offers a new Obesity Care Exercise Specialist certificate for professionals seeking additional preparation in this evolving field, and recent exercise-professional guidance also is available in Batrakoulis's 2025 book on obesity and weight-management programming (12,13).

7. Trend Name: Group Fitness Classes

About: This trend includes instructor-led exercise classes offered in gyms, recreation centers, or studios, typically with large participant groups. Formats may include indoor cycling, yoga, barre, dance fitness, boxing, kickboxing, and strength- or cardio-based classes. These sessions provide structured group workouts designed to support motivation, consistency, and fitness across a range of experience levels.

Survey performance: *Group Fitness Classes* rose from No. 13 in 2026 to No. 7, after returning to the top 20 last year following a 2-year absence. It ranked No. 1 within the Structured Exercise trend category in the U.S. and ranked among the top three trends in 25% of international partners' surveys.

Application: According to one 2025 survey (14), 57% of surveyed consumers say social interaction and connection are the main reasons they join a fitness community. Evidence also suggests that group-based programs and supervision by trained and qualified professionals may improve exercise adherence among adults with overweight or obesity (15). Group fitness remains a key strategy for exercise professionals to promote long-term adherence by reinforcing both the physical benefits of activity and its social value. Exercise professionals can promote group fitness opportunities to support adherence, enjoyment, and community.

8. Trend Name: Data-driven Training Technology

About: This type of technology uses individual health and physiological metrics to personalize exercise programming and inform recovery strategies. Rather than relying solely on generalized training recommendations, data such as heart rate variability, sleep quality, training load, and estimated $\dot{V}O_2max$ can be used to tailor exercise programs to individual readiness and recovery status.

Survey performance: *Data-driven Training Technology* ranked No. 8 for the second consecutive year. Notably, athletic trainers ranked this trend No. 2, substantially higher than its overall rank. This may reflect the increasing importance of objective performance indicators and recovery metrics to guide return-to-play decisions, readiness to train, and optimize athletic performance.

Application: Technology enables professionals to adjust exercise prescriptions based on recovery status and training load rather than relying solely on fixed training plans. Wearable sensors and other monitoring

tools can provide information about internal and external training loads. By establishing baseline measures and monitoring responses over time, practitioners can evaluate changes in fitness, recovery, and performance and make more informed training decisions (16).

9. Trend Name: Exercise for Mental Health and Well-Being

About: This category recognizes exercise as a powerful tool for mental well-being, reducing anxiety, stress, and depression. Research supports aerobic and resistance training, as well as mind–body practices (*e.g.*, yoga, tai chi) for enhancing mood, cognition, and resilience (17–20).

Survey performance: Since its initial inclusion in the 2024 survey, *Exercise for Mental Health and Well-Being* has ranked in the top 10 every year. In 2027, it ranked No. 9 overall, No. 3 by health and wellness coaches, and No. 3 internationally in Australia.

Application: Research indicates that exercise can lead to meaningful changes in both emotional and cognitive health across the lifespan. These positive effects have been observed after acute and chronic bouts of cardiorespiratory, resistance, and mind–body exercise (17–20). Understanding the effects of exercise on psychological health allows exercise professionals to adequately frame the multifaceted impact of exercise on one's well-being.

10. Trend Name: Influencer/Ambassador-led Fitness Programs

About: This trend encompasses fitness programs that feature social media trainers, fitness entrepreneurs, or brand ambassadors who create online fitness programming, education, motivation, resources, or product-related content. These programs leverage the creator's digital presence and personal brand to engage followers, build community, and influence exercise behaviors.

Survey performance: *Influencer/Ambassador-led Fitness Programs* debuted at No. 12 in 2025, fell out of the top 20 in 2026, and returned at No. 10 in 2027. It ranked among the top three trends for athletic trainers and new professionals (less than 1 year of experience).

Application: Exercise professionals should continue to prioritize evidence-based practice, expertise, and appropriate professional credentials in all health and fitness communications. As information circulates through social media, exercise professionals can help counter misinformation, promote safe practices, and translate popular content into evidence-informed guidance. When aligned with these standards and approached with caution, partnering with trusted local influencers may help expand client reach, increase awareness of programs, and support continued exercise engagement. Be sure to check out the *Health & Fitness from A to Z* column, "Fit to Follow? A Practical Guide to Evaluating Health and Fitness Influencers," in this issue to dig deeper into this trend.

11. Trend Name: Hot and Cold Therapies (Thermal Therapies)

About: Few recovery modalities are as accessible or widely applied as hot and cold therapy. Localized applications, including heating pads or ice packs, target specific areas of soreness or inflammation, while whole-body approaches, such as saunas and cold plunges, drive broader physiological changes, including changes in core temperature, cardiac output, and endocrine signaling (21,22).

Survey performance: *Hot and Cold Therapies* climbs to No. 11 in 2027, up six spots from No. 17 in 2026 and its highest-ever ranking to date, continuing a steady climb since debuting at No. 20 in 2025. It is the highest-ranked trend within the Recovery-Based Therapies category for 2027, ahead of *Blood Flow Restriction Training*, *Light Therapy*, *Massage/Vibration/Compression (No. 16)*, and *Neuroregulation and Recovery* (Figure 1).

Application: Fitness facilities and direct-to-consumer wellness companies increasingly offer thermal therapies as standard services, and exercise professionals must keep pace to build trust with consumers. While formal prescription guidelines are still needed, professionals who understand their physiological effects are best positioned to help clients use them safely and strategically. As recovery becomes a more structured part of exercise programming, these tools are increasingly applied with attention to when and why a given modality is used, rather than treated as always-on amenities (23,24). Proper integration may support recovery during and after sessions, adherence to training, and client satisfaction, as consumers expect this guidance as part of comprehensive care.

12. Trend Name: High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)

About: This type of training consists of alternating brief bouts of high-effort exercise (typically >85% of maximum heart rate) with periods of active recovery or lower-intensity exercise (<65% HRmax). HIIT can be incorporated into a wide range of aerobic and functional activities, including running, cycling, stair climbing, and body weight circuits.

Survey performance: HIIT holds steady at No. 12 in this year's survey, reflecting its continued relevance as a stable fitness trend. Across the historical rankings, HIIT has remained highly visible, including No. 1 rankings in both 2014 and 2018. Among professional groups, registered dietitians were the only respondents to rank HIIT among their top three trends (Figure 2).

Application: HIIT remains an effective strategy for individuals seeking meaningful health and fitness

benefits in a relatively short amount of time, producing cardiometabolic adaptations comparable to moderate-intensity continuous training while requiring less total exercise time (25,26). As digital fitness platforms and wearable technologies continue to evolve, HIIT remains well-suited for both in-person and remote instruction. Its versatility, time efficiency, and strong evidence base have made HIIT a widely adopted training approach for both healthy and clinical populations. To ensure safe and effective HIIT implementation, exercise professionals should design individualized programs with appropriate intensity progressions, work-to-rest ratios, and adequate recovery periods.

13. Trend Name: Functional Fitness Training (FFT)

About: FFT is used to improve ease during activities of daily living, such as balance, coordination, and functional strength. Programs reflect multijoint movement patterns that prepare individuals for tasks in typical activities done throughout the day, like bending, squatting, pushing, and twisting.

Survey performance: In 2027, this trend ranked No. 13, down from No. 10 in 2026 and No. 9 in 2025. It ranked among the top 10 trends 16 times between 2007 and 2027. It also ranked among the top three trends for respondents in military/government/public safety programs and in Cyprus, Mexico, Spain, and Turkey.

Application: FFT can help exercise professionals bridge the gap between performance in the gym and clients' real-world movement demands. It has been shown to improve performance for athletes (27) and support independence and movement quality in older adults (28). This makes functional fitness a highly adaptable strategy for clients across a wide range of ages and goals.

14. Trend Name: Personal Training (Face-to-Face, Online, or Hybrid)

About: Personal training delivers individualized exercise programming and coaching tailored to client goals, fitness levels, and health needs. Sessions may incorporate strength training, cardiovascular exercise, and behavior-change support, and can be delivered face-to-face, online, or through hybrid formats to enhance accountability, accessibility, and personalized guidance.

Survey performance: *Personal Training* returned to the top 20 list this year, ranking No. 14 overall. Notably, it was ranked No. 3 among respondents in the owners' professional role category (Figure 2), highlighting its continued importance within the industry. Internationally, *Personal Training* ranked among the top three trends in Brazil, Cyprus, Lebanon, Lithuania, Portugal, Taiwan, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates (Table 4).

Application: Traditional personal training provides immediate, hands-on instruction and technique correction, while online training offers schedule flexibility for clients who can complete some workouts with remote guidance. Hybrid training bridges these approaches by combining periodic in-person technique assessments with app-based or remotely delivered workouts, supporting both professional accountability and client autonomy. Certified personal trainers can leverage these formats to diversify services, expand reach beyond their local communities, and support retention through options that accommodate a range of budgets, schedules, and lifestyles.

15. Trend Name: Competitive Fitness Events

About: This trend includes organized exercise-based competitions and endurance challenges that involve various modes of exercise, such as running, strength stations, obstacle elements, and functional training tasks. These events emphasize measurable performance outcomes and often inspire affiliated training programs within gyms and community groups.

Survey performance: The 2027 survey marks the first year in which *Competitive Fitness Events* was included as a trend. The widespread enthusiasm for these exercise-based events propelled it to No. 15 in its first year. It received its strongest support from respondents in the sports performance settings category, who ranked it No. 2 overall (Figure 3).

Application: Competitive fitness events require focused, goal-oriented training to ensure adequate fitness levels are obtained to reduce the risk of injury and reach performance goals. Exercise professionals play a critical role in helping individuals develop appropriate fitness-related goals, curating exercise programs tailored for specific competitions, and promoting recovery methods during training and postcompetition. With proper goal development, training plans, and recovery methods, participants of these events can experience numerous benefits, such as improved fitness (29), a sense of belonging (30), and self-reported well-being (31). To learn more, be sure to read the feature article in this issue by Stephanie L. Cooper, Ph.D., ACSM-EP, titled "Exercise-based Fitness Competitions: The Allure for Participants and Guidance from Certified Exercise Professionals."

16. Trend Name: Massage, Vibration, and Compression

About: This trend includes therapies used to reduce pain and soreness, improve circulation, enhance range of motion, and support recovery, commonly delivered through massage guns, vibration platforms, and compression devices or garments.

Survey performance: *Massage, Vibration, and Compression* debuts in the top 20 trends for the first time in

TABLE 4: Top Three Fitness Trends Across 16 Countries

Country	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Supplemental Digital Content
Algeria	Data-driven training technologies	Wearable technology	Adaptive fitness and inclusive training	*N/A
Australia	Pilates	Wearable technology	Exercise for mental health and well-being	https://links.lww.com/FIT/A480
Brazil	Personal training	Traditional strength training	AI-driven fitness	https://links.lww.com/FIT/A481
China	Exercise is Medicine®	Exercise for weight management	Lifestyle medicine	https://links.lww.com/FIT/A482
Cyprus	Personal training	Functional fitness training	Small group training	*N/A
Finland	Wearable technology	Outdoor fitness activities	Mobile exercise apps	*N/A
Greece	Wearable technology	Small-group training	Traditional strength training	*N/A
Lebanon	Personal training	Group fitness classes	Traditional strength training	*N/A
Lithuania	Traditional strength training	Group fitness classes	Personal training	https://links.lww.com/FIT/A483
Mexico	Traditional strength training	Exercise for weight management	Functional fitness training	https://links.lww.com/FIT/A484
Poland	Group fitness classes	Traditional strength training	Wearable technology	*N/A
Portugal	Employing certified exercise professionals	Personal training	Hybrid training	https://links.lww.com/FIT/A485
Spain	Small-group training	Functional fitness training	Fitness programs for older adults	https://links.lww.com/FIT/A486
Taiwan	Fitness programs for older adults	Exercise is Medicine®	Personal training	https://links.lww.com/FIT/A487
Turkey	Functional Fitness Training	Exercise for Weight Management	Personal Training	https://links.lww.com/FIT/A488
UAE	Personal training	Group fitness classes	Traditional strength training	*N/A

*Providing supplemental survey content was optional.

2027, entering at No. 16. Its appearance reflects the broader momentum of the Recovery-Based Therapies category, alongside *Hot and Cold Therapies* (No. 11), within this year's rankings.

Application: As devices like massage guns, vibration platforms, and compression garments become common across consumers' homes and fitness settings, matching the modality's physiological and psychological effects to the health and performance goal matters. Massage guns deliver percussive therapy, which has been associated with acute improvements in flexibility, explosive strength, and reduced musculoskeletal pain with repeated use (32). Vibration therapy promotes neuromuscular activation (33) and may reduce pain in some chronic musculoskeletal conditions (34), while compression therapy supports circulation and has been linked to reduced pain and improved perceptual recovery, though its effects on performance remain less clear (35). With evidence continuing to amass specific use cases across both objective and perceptual performance outcomes, using these tools strategically may offer more benefit, with individual preferences and goals shaping applied use.

17. Trend Name: Adult Recreation and Sport Clubs

About: Recreation and sport clubs include organized, often recurring clubs or leagues for activities such as

pickleball, walking, running, cycling, basketball, or soccer. These clubs provide social engagement and opportunities to be active with others and also may include fitness or performance goals such as training for a 10K race, competition, or sports tournament.

Survey performance: *Adult Recreation and Sport Clubs* was introduced in the 2026 survey, when it debuted at No. 9. In 2027, it remained in the top 20 but fell eight spots to No. 17. Despite this change in rank, the trend's mean rating decreased by less than three-tenths of a point. Because rank depends on how each trend scores compared with the others that year, the lower ranking may reflect this small decrease alongside higher ratings for other trends.

Application: Like *Group Fitness Classes* (No. 7 trend in 2027), this trend emphasizes a combination of physical and social benefits with participation, outside of a traditional gym setting. Evidence suggests that the appeal of these programs remains tied to opportunities for social connection and community (14). Exercise professionals can support participation by becoming knowledgeable about local offerings and, where appropriate, collaborating with, supporting, and/or leading community-based recreation and sport programs.

18. Trend Name: Outdoor Fitness Activities

About: This trend includes activities that take place in natural or outdoor environments, such as parks, trails, or open water. It includes activities like walking groups, cycling, hiking, kayaking, and paddleboarding. These activities leverage outdoor settings to provide unique physical, psychological, and social benefits.

Survey performance: Despite falling from a peak ranking of the overall No. 3 trend in 2022, *Outdoor Fitness Activities* has consistently ranked in the top 20 trends since 2012. When examining trends within each survey category, *Outdoor Fitness Activities* ranked as the top trend for the Exercise Setting category in 2027 (Figure 1).



Application: Research suggests that outdoor physical activity can provide mental health benefits, including improvements in affect, anxiety, depression, and stress, while offering physical benefits comparable to indoor exercise (36–38). In fact, nature-based exercise may be perceived by some as more enjoyable than indoor exercise, which could impact long-term exercise adherence (39,40). Exercise professionals can promote outdoor exercise by identifying local spaces suitable for physical activity, sharing organized opportunities such as running clubs, and offering services in outdoor settings when appropriate.

19. Trend Name: Youth Athletic Development

About: Athletic development programs for youth commonly focus on the development of motor skills, strength, power, speed, agility, balance, coordination, and endurance to support sport-specific performance. Athlete development models generally promote participation in multiple organized sports year-round and emphasize teamwork, competition, and sportsmanship (41,42).

Survey performance: *Youth Athletic Development* has consistently been a top 20 trend since 2024. Although its ranking has fluctuated over the years, it moved up slightly from the No. 20 overall trend last year to No. 19 this year.

Application: Based on the 2022 National Survey of Children's Health, it is estimated that approximately 54% of youth aged 6–17 participate in afterschool or weekend sports in the U.S.; however, disparities in participation exist (43,44). Exercise professionals can support youth sport preparation by creating evidence-based training programs and using effective, age-appropriate communication strategies (8,45). With proper guidance, youth can develop long-term athletic skills through early sport sampling, training that minimizes injury risk while maximizing health- and skill-related fitness, and participation in a supportive psychosocial environment (45). Check out the *Take Ten* column in this issue, "Ten Things Exercise Professionals Should Know About Youth Athletic Development," to learn more about this trend.

20. Trend Name: Fitness at Home

About: *Fitness at Home* refers to exercise performed in a person's own living space, using equipment, bodyweight training, and even connected fitness platforms and mobile apps. Interest in this trend surged during the COVID-19 pandemic out of necessity and remains elevated, despite the record high number of gym memberships reported in recent years (46). Together, these trends point to a blurring of exercise settings, where consumers may move fluidly between home and facility-based options, rather than choosing one over another.

Survey performance: *Fitness at Home* returned to the top 20 in 2027 at No. 20 after appearing in 2022 and 2023, then falling off the list from 2024 through 2026. Its return may reflect the continued maturity of the home fitness market alongside renewed engagement with commercial facilities.

Application: As home- and facility-based fitness increasingly coexist rather than compete with one another, professionals and facilities have an opportunity to support clients across both settings. Home-based resistance training using bands, body weight, or light dumbbells can improve strength and muscle similarly to traditional gym equipment when effort and volume are matched (9). Wearable technology could further support this flexible approach by allowing individuals to remain connected with exercise professionals and by offering a consistent way to measure overall physical activity dose regardless of setting.

GLOBAL TRENDS COMPARISON

Since 2021, the ACSM fitness trends framework has been adopted internationally, enabling cross-country comparisons of industry developments (47–52). Recent national and regional studies have extended this approach (53–57). The present survey adds international context, supporting a broader assessment of emerging global health and fitness trends.

The 2027 survey constitutes the most extensive project to date, involving a total of 17 international partners from six continents. See Table 4 for further details on global trends and hyperlinks to supplementary data from our international contributors. The following section discusses trends with potential global relevance.

Across the 16 international surveys, comparative analysis identified both a common international core and meaningful country-specific variation in perceived fitness trends. Within the top five, *Traditional Strength Training* was the most recurrent trend, appearing in 10 countries (62.5%), followed by *Personal Training* in nine (56.3%) and *FFT* in seven (43.8%). *Wearable Technology* and *Fitness Programs for Older Adults* each appeared in six countries (37.5%). Within the top three trends, *Personal Training* was most frequent, ranking among the first three positions in eight countries (50.0%), followed by *Traditional Strength Training* in seven (43.8%) and *Wearable Technology* in five (31.3%) (see Figure 5). *Group Fitness Classes* and *FFT* each appeared in the top three in four countries (25.0%).

Among the 15 countries for which complete top-20 rankings were available, *Wearable Technology* appeared in every survey. *Traditional Strength Training* and *FFT* appeared in 14 countries (93.3%), while *Exercise for Weight Management*; *Balance, Flow, and Core Strength*; and *HIIT* appeared in 13 (86.7%). *Personal Training* and *Exercise for Mental Health and Well-Being* were represented in 12 countries (80.0%), and *Commercial or Multipurpose Gyms* in 11 (73.3%). *Weight-Management Exercise* and *Balance- and Core-Oriented Programming* were broadly represented but usually ranked outside the top five, suggesting sustained relevance rather than universal emergence as leading priorities. Turkey was excluded from the top 20 trends analysis, due to only the top 10 trends being made available.

Country-specific profiles nonetheless differed. Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates showed the closest alignment, sharing identical top-five rankings led by *Personal Training*, *Group Fitness Classes*, and *Traditional Strength Training*. Australia was distinguished by *Pilates* as its leading trend and by the separate inclusion of *Yoga*, while also ranking *Wearable Technology*, *Mental-Health-Oriented Exercise*, and *Programs for Older Adults* as top trends. Finland showed the clearest digital and outdoor profile, with *Wearable Technology*, *Outdoor Fitness Activities*, *Mobile Exercise Applications*, and *AI-Driven Fitness* occupying four of its first five positions. Algeria also demonstrated a technology-oriented profile, led by *Data-Driven Training Technologies* and *Wearable Technology*, combined with *Adaptive and Inclusive Fitness*, *HIIT*, and *Traditional Strength Training*.

Several European countries emphasized supervised and group-based exercise, although their priorities varied. Greece ranked *Wearable Technology* first, followed by *Small-Group Training* and *Traditional Strength Training*. Lithuania and Poland emphasized *Traditional Strength Training*, *Group Fitness Classes*, and *Personal Training*. Portugal presented a professionalization- and delivery-oriented profile, ranking *Certified Exercise Professionals* first, *Personal Training* second, and *Hybrid Training* third. Spain prioritized *Small-Group Training*, *Functional Fitness*, *Programs for Older Adults*, *Competitive Events*, and *Wearable Technology*. Cyprus showed a coach-led profile, with *Personal Training*, *Functional Fitness*, *Small-Group Training*, *Traditional Strength Training*, and *HIIT* occupying the first five positions. Turkey similarly emphasized functional and health-related exercise, led by *FFT*, *Exercise for Weight Management*, *Personal Training*, *Traditional Strength Training*, and *Outdoor Activities*.

The Latin American surveys combined conventional services with technological and health-related priorities. Brazil ranked *Personal Training* and *Traditional Strength Training* first and second, followed by *AI-Driven Fitness*, *Exercise for Weight Management*, and *Programs for Older Adults*. Mexico prioritized *Traditional Strength Training*, *Exercise for Weight Management*, *Functional Fitness*, *Mental Well-Being*, and *Programs for Older Adults*. These findings suggest that established supervised services coexist with increasing attention to digital innovation, weight management, mental health, and healthy aging.

China and Taiwan displayed strong prevention- and health-oriented profiles, although their rankings differed. China prioritized *Exercise is Medicine®*, *Exercise for Weight Management*, *Lifestyle Medicine*, and *Youth-Focused Physical Activity and Athletic Development*. Taiwan ranked *Programs for Older Adults* first, followed by *Exercise is Medicine®*, *Personal Training*, *Functional Fitness*, and *Lifestyle Medicine*. These patterns indicate

Figure 5. Top trends per country/region listed from highest to lowest frequency.



recognition of exercise as a component of prevention, chronic disease management, healthy aging, and population-health promotion.

Comparison with the U.S. illustrated convergence and variation. The U.S. survey was led by *Wearable Technology*, *Mobile Exercise Applications*, and *Balance, Flow, and Core Strength*, followed by *Programs for Older Adults* and *Traditional Strength Training*. *Wearable Technology* represented the clearest commonality, appearing in the top 20 of all 15 countries with complete rankings and within the top three in Australia, Algeria, Finland, Greece, and Poland. *Traditional Strength Training* also showed strong agreement; it ranked fifth in the U.S. and appeared in the top five in 10 national surveys. *Programs for Older Adults* ranked fourth in the U.S. and entered the top five in six countries. *Exercise for Weight Management* ranked sixth in the U.S. and within the top five in Brazil, China, Mexico, and Turkey.

Important differences also were evident. *Mobile Exercise Applications* ranked second in the U.S. but reached the top

three only in Finland, indicating a stronger consumer-digital orientation in the U.S. market. *Balance, Flow, and Core Strength* ranked third in the U.S. and appeared widely across national top-20 lists, but entered the top five only in Greece, Poland, and Portugal. Conversely, *Personal Training* and *Functional Fitness* were more prominent internationally, appearing in the top five in nine and seven countries, respectively, but ranking 14th and 13th in the U.S. This contrast was especially apparent in Cyprus, where *Personal*, *Functional*, and *Small-Group Training* occupied the first three positions, whereas *Wearable Technology* ranked 14th and *Mobile Exercise Applications* 26th. Cyprus nevertheless shared some U.S. priorities: *Traditional Strength Training* ranked fourth in Cyprus and fifth in the U.S., while *Exercise for Weight Management* occupied the sixth position in both.

Overall, the surveys suggest that contemporary fitness markets share a stable foundation of *Wearable Technology*, strength-oriented exercise, *Functional Training*, personalized services, and health-related programming. Their rank order, however, is shaped by demographics, cultural preferences, professional structures, healthcare integration, technological adoption, and service-delivery models. Technology and wellness were especially prominent in the U.S., Finland, and Algeria; individualized and group-based services characterized Cyprus, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, Lithuania, and Poland; professionalization was most visible in Portugal; and preventive or clinically integrated approaches were more evident in China and Taiwan. These comparisons should be interpreted cautiously because national samples differed in composition and size, and some international surveys included localized adaptations or revisions to the original trend list. Accordingly, rankings reflect relative professional perceptions within each country rather than direct comparisons of absolute scores.

LIMITATIONS

Trend rankings reflect what exercise professionals perceive as visible or prominent in the health and fitness industry. These perceptions may be shaped by what professionals encounter in practice, including clientele, employer priorities, social media exposure, available services, and trends emphasized in their local market. This aligns with the purpose of a trends survey: to identify current and emerging directions recognized by professionals in the field. Respondents' familiarity with a trend may influence ratings, and visibility and recognition are central to whether a practice or topic is perceived as a trend. Because each trend was rated independently, rankings should not be interpreted as direct head-to-head comparisons among trends.

The survey reflects input from exercise professionals who self-selected into participation, so results should be interpreted as a snapshot of professional perspectives rather than a complete representation of the health and fitness industry. Subgroup, country, and regional findings also should be interpreted within context because participation, sampling, translation, local priorities, and trend lists may vary. To further contextualize the rankings and expand their practical application, "*The Employer Perspective: Insights and Practical Applications of the 2027 Fitness Trends*," in this issue, provides additional insight from professionals across varied sectors of the fitness industry. Future surveys and workgroups will continue efforts to broaden participation, strengthen representation across professional roles and settings, and refine trend definitions for clarity and consistency.

SUMMARY

Now in its 21st year, results of ACSM's Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends reflect an industry landscape shaped by digital tools, recovery, flexible delivery, and programming that supports participation across the lifespan. *Wearable Technology* remained the top-ranked trend for the 10th time overall, while *Competitive Fitness Events and Massage, Vibration, and Compression* joined the top 20 list for the first time.

As a whole, the 2027 findings suggest continued demand for technology-enabled fitness, strength-focused training, and programs that support weight management, healthy aging, mental well-being, and social engagement. Several trends, including *Wearable Technology*, *Mobile Exercise Apps*, *Traditional Strength Training*, *Exercise for Weight Management*, and *Fitness Programs for Older Adults*, have remained in the top 20 rankings for at least five consecutive years, highlighting their sustained relevance to exercise professional practice. The 2027 trends also point to opportunities to combine evidence-based exercise programming with flexible delivery models, data-informed decision-making, and services that support long-term participation. Drawn from the perspectives of exercise professionals worldwide, the survey results provide insight into priorities likely to shape fitness programming, service delivery, and client engagement across diverse settings in the year ahead.

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2027 ACSM WORLDWIDE FITNESS TRENDS



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Congrats 2027 Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends Prize Winners

The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) randomly selected prize winners from all who participated in the 21st annual Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends. Here's what the winners said.



"I am honored to be selected as a prize winner by ACSM. As a newer member, I am excited to see the direction ACSM is going and the results of the Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends!"
Otmar Borchard, Carlton, OR
Winner of $100 gift card



"Thanks, ACSM! I appreciate *ACSM's Health & Fitness Journal*'s commitment to publishing practical content, staying current with industry trends, and adapting to the evolving fitness landscape while ensuring its publications remain grounded in science.
Alicja Stannard, Hamden, CT
Winner of *ACSM's Nutrition for Exercise Science*, 2nd edition



"I am excited to be a prize winner for completing ACSM's Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends. I do look forward to the published survey results each year!"
B. Sue Graves, Boca Raton, FL
Winner of *ACSM's Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription*, 12th edition



"I answered the annual Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends because I wanted to help and support ACSM's mission. I was not expecting to be a prize winner. Thank you for recognizing members' commitment."
Alvaro Gurovich, El Paso, TX
Winner of *ACSM's Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription*, 12th edition



"Thank you! I really appreciate this useful prize. I am looking forward to reading the new edition and am grateful for the opportunity to participate in ACSM's Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends."
Sheila Easa, Aurora, OH
Winner of *ACSM's Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription*, 12th edition



"This book will be a nice addition to the ACSM library I've accumulated. In an online world, a physical book provides structure and convenience...sans-WiFi!"
Yale Hughes, Fayetteville AR
Winner *ACSM's Career and Business Guide for the Fitness Professional*



"I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to ACSM's Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends. Thank you ACSM for continuing to advance knowledge and practice within the health and fitness field."
Gianna Mastrofini, Columbia SC
Winner of *ACSM's Nutrition for Exercise Science*, 2nd edition



"I consider ACSM to be the gold standard in the health and fitness industry, and I look forward to continuing to trust, utilize, and apply its evidence-based educational resources throughout my professional career."
Eric Stallmann, Lenox, MI
Winner of *ACSM's Nutrition for Exercise Science*, 2nd edition



"I always take part in ACSM's annual survey since it is one of the tools we can all use in planning the future direction of our businesses. Thank you so much for selecting me as a prize winner!"
Carly Pizzani, Woodstock, VT
Winner of *ACSM's Introduction to Exercise Science*, 4th edition



"I'm proud to be affiliated with ACSM, so I'm always happy to complete any of their surveys. Winning a prize for doing so is a nice bonus!"
Brian Wylie, Healdsburg, CA
Winner of *ACSM's Essentials of Youth Fitness*



"Thank you ACSM! I am always happy to share my thoughts and experiences on industry surveys as they compile valuable information. Receiving an ACSM book is an added bonus!"
Darci Jo Revier, Saint Robert, MO
Winner of *ACSM's Essentials of Exercise Oncology*