

ISAEC

ISAEC Quick Stats...

Patient referrals to date: **3,947**

Average wait time: **13 days**

Patients needing Imaging/Specialist: **301**

Inter-professional Spine Assessment & Education Clinics (ISAEC)

Understanding Core Strength



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Questions?
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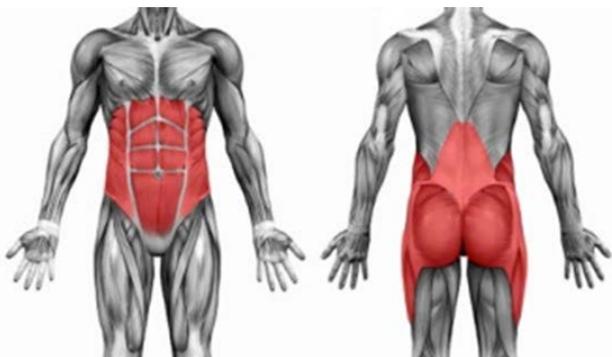
There are real benefits to having excellent core fitness. However, the term 'core strength' has become a buzzword and like many fitness trends, is often misunderstood. As such, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some important points to keep in mind when discussing "core" with your patients.

Firstly, it's not really about 'strength'. The word strength refers to the ability to produce force. Most of our patients (except the most deconditioned) have adequate core strength to perform their Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) as well as the occasional lift. However, what they lack is endurance. In order to be effective, the core muscles need to be able to produce low levels of force over long periods of time to enable us to be up and about on our feet enjoying our day to day lives. This concept is often not addressed in



most core programs. Consequently, most people often participate in 'core' exercises that can only be performed for very short durations and are often much too difficult. This is problematic as you are not training the core the way it was designed to function. One way I like to explain this concept to my patients is to relate their core muscles to other parts of their body i.e. "Your tricep is like a sprinter, it needs to produce large bursts of force for short periods of time, but your core muscles are more like a marathon runner. If you trained for a marathon by sprinting all the time your chances of success would be pretty low". This is why expertise in the science of exercise prescription is important as patients need proper evaluation of both strength and endurance to address any noted deficits.

Secondly, not everyone will see results. A patient will only respond positively to a core fitness program if they are lacking in core fitness. As simple as this concept is, core strengthening is often provided as a blanket recommendation for everyone with Low Back Pain (LBP). However, most practitioners forget that poor core fitness is not the only reason patients have LBP. It is therefore important to establish an accurate diagnosis as to the source of a patient's LBP and provide specific exercise interventions based on these findings. Nonetheless, given Western society's propensity for inactivity and sitting, most patients may benefit from some sort of core training.



Finally, don't forget the hips! We often see people who have made an effort to improve their abdominal fitness and have only seen minor improvement. It is important to note that core refers to the entire system supporting the pelvis and spine. In particular, one of the keys to the locomotor system is the hips. A great abdomen is not enough if it is balanced on a wobbly femur! Endurance, strength, and mobility in the pelvis and hips aid in protecting the lower back and preventing injury.

Hopefully these tips and insights will help you the next time you are discussing core strength with your patients.

Did you know?

ISAEC is still recruiting PCPs. Just a few more spots left.

For referral privileges please visit (<removed>).