



# Good REPS

**Are all personal trainers created equal? Apparently not. Rachel Macdonald asks about the advantages of using a REPs-registered PT**

{ So, you're sitting in your surgeon's rooms, waiting for an opinion regarding your bung knee. Everything is there: the slightly worn chairs, the not-so-recent collection of dog-eared magazines, the box of old toys from fast-food restaurants to amuse the children. Something's missing, though. There is no indication, anywhere, that your surgeon belongs to either the Royal College of Surgeons or the Australasian College. There's no sign that they've passed any rigorous standard of training, that they are committed to any ongoing professional development... or that they're bound by any ethical obligations, either.

What would you do? Would you risk being the next patient of an unqualified doctor? Why would you choose a specialist who doesn't meet the requirements of the governing industry body?

And the same goes for your fitness provider, says Stephen Gacsal, registrar of the New Zealand Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs). Why would you not choose to work with a gym or personal trainer who's qualified to practice, bound to operate under a code of ethics, and obliged – in order

to retain their certification – to pursue ongoing training and up-skilling?

"To be qualified is one thing. It shows that someone has received a tick – somewhere in the world – to practice," says Stephen. "However, to be registered with a governing body shows that this person is willing to be assessed on an ongoing basis in terms of their deliverable performance, and is prepared to up-school themselves in order to offer the best service possible to their clients."

Every REPs-accredited fitness trainer or gym must work to achieve ongoing education credits, just as any College surgeon or dentist must do. This includes participation in external – and sometimes international – courses, all of which contribute a certain number of credits to their certification each year.

"Each accredited REPs member must thereby achieve a number of totally independently assessed career points," explains Stephen.

Also, it's important to remember that with a REPs-affiliated trainer, any kind of proven unethical behaviour attracts stringent repercussions. An established breach of the REPs code of practice means immediate withdrawal

of their registration.

"That's an instant sign that you're dealing with a total wild card. Because they are bound by a code of ethics, a REPs-registered trainer must follow the processes and requirements of their affiliation. A non-registered practitioner might do so, too... but then again, they might not," says Stephen. "In addition, it means that they are no longer covered by the REPs insurance policy, should you suffer any physical harm consequent to your training. All REPs-registered trainers are fully insured – end of story."

Affiliation also tells you that a REPs trainer is just that – you won't find them masquerading as a masseuse or physio.



“They’re there for your fitness alone, working within clear boundaries. Legally, there are things they may not do; then there are certain processes that are not defined in legislation, but are there in the code of practice,

For those out there wanting to know more, the REPs website – [www.reps.org.nz](http://www.reps.org.nz) – is basically a searchable database of REPs-related information. Not only does it detail the requirements that need to be met by

“To be qualified is one thing. It shows that someone has received a tick – somewhere in the world – to practice. However, to be registered with a governing body shows that this person is willing to be assessed on an ongoing basis.”

such as asking before touching,” explains Stephen.

The REPs code of practice has been developed in conjunction with similar international guidelines. And the register itself is affiliated with the International Confederation of Registers for Exercise Professionals (IC REPs). Further, most registrations with REPs in New Zealand automatically include membership of the Australian Fitness Network, which runs the highly popular annual FILEX fitness convention in Sydney.

“This all opens the way for international communication and consistency of practice, but it also means REPs trainers enjoy portability of recognised skills – they can work in any IC REPs-governed market. Their registration is clear evidence that they meet the required international practicing criteria. And that’s a great thing in terms of the wider industry here. They bring back new experience and expertise, which only serves to make the industry here so much richer,” says Stephen.

affiliated trainers, but it allows those in need of their services to locate their nearest REPs service provider, complete with a profile.

The register currently accounts for almost 2000 individual trainers nationwide, and around 130 facilities.

“That’s well more than 50 percent of the industry, serving between 60 percent and 70 percent of the consumer market,” says Stephen. “Our goal is to make both those figures 100 percent.”

For all the reasons above, it’s important that fitness professionals don’t just join Fitness New Zealand, but that they also register with REPs, says Richard Beddie, CEO of Fitness New Zealand.

“More than anything else, it signals to the market that they will be receiving safe and effective exercise advice. They can pick their trainer on factors such as personality and availability, and so forth, but they can also be totally sure that they’ll be getting someone who knows what they’re doing. And they’ve got recourse to industry-administered remedy, should any issues arise.” ◀