

"I have always been passionate about helping people with their health and fitness."

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Oli Fiassam

Clinical Exercise Physiologist

Salary range

Band 5 (£25,000 - £30,000)



How I got into the role

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I have always been passionate about helping people with their health and fitness. Becoming a clinical exercise physiologist meant I could use my knowledge and skills to help patients.

My journey started with a degree in Sport and Exercise Science. During my third year, I completed my first clinical experience, which was a six-week placement in cardiac rehabilitation. I also volunteered as an exercise instructor, leading circuits for cancer patients with Macmillan Cancer Support.

While doing my master's degree in Clinical Exercise Physiology ^[1], I completed a level 4 Specialist Instructor training and gained more clinical experience by completing placements in cardiac rehabilitation. Soon after qualifying, I was employed as a clinical exercise physiologist in cardiac rehabilitation.

What I do

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My typical day starts at 8am. I'll do some safety checks, check my emails, etc. Working with a team of nurses, dietitians, and physiologists, we'll complete a patient handover. We'll discuss the patients' needs, health status and progress. The clinics and patients' assessments for the day are also presented to the team.

There'll typically be between four to six fitness assessments per morning. I'll be checking medical histories and assessing patients' risks to exercise. I'll also discuss the patient's goals and activity levels. An exercise test is then performed, usually a cycle or walk test while monitoring cardiovascular ^[2] vital signs (ECGs, blood pressure, heart rate). Once the test is complete, the patient will start the exercise I prescribe.

In the afternoon, we deliver and supervise two exercise classes lasting 90 minutes. There could be up to 30 patients in each class. The classes consist of 15-minute warm up, up to 40 minutes of individually prescribed exercise and 10-minute cool down. Our role is to provide a safe environment for effective exercise.

The day will typically end with me adding the results of fitness assessments and exercise classes to a patient's record.

The best bits, challenges and myths

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People often think I am a physiotherapist. Physiotherapists may use exercise therapy in their care, but clinical exercise physiologists use exercise as their main therapy as it is our specialist area for treating health conditions.

Clinical exercise physiology ^[1] is a new role, so other healthcare professionals may be unaware of what we do. Efforts are being made to increase its visibility and recognition, and the recent registration with the Academy of Healthcare Science can only help.

Life outside work

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I go to the gym most days of the week. Sometimes, I play football or go for a bike ride. I like to stay active for the health benefits that we preach, but it also helps me take a break from work.

Career plans and top tips for others

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I would like to pursue a clinical academic career, which would allow me to produce research while practising as a clinician. I completed a National Institute for Health and Care Research fellowship and would like to complete the pathway up to the doctoral level.

I would advise somebody considering this role to volunteer and get experience in a clinical setting while doing their degrees. Ideally, involving exercise. This will help develop key qualities that cannot be taught at university.

You also need some key skills such as good communication, patience, and empathy.

Source URL:<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/healthcare-science/roles-healthcare-science/physiological-sciences/clinical-exercise-physiologist/real-life-story-oli-fiassam>

Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Physiology> [2]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Cardiovascular>