

EMBRACING WELLNESS THE HOLISTIC WAY

by Toni Krasicki

Savvy health clubs are teaming up with allied health professionals in order to deliver an even greater service to their clients. Toni Krasicki speaks with one such club.

In the last few decades the Australian fitness industry has evolved to reflect society's increasingly scientific approach to exercise and wellness. These days, successful trainers cannot afford to focus solely on the physical aesthetics of their clients, but in order to be competitive need to have the ability to educate clients on a wide range of related health and wellness topics.

As a result, savvy health clubs are beginning to expand their services to offer clients a more holistic approach to achieving optimal wellbeing, providing members with easy access to these allied health services; in best case scenarios this occurs under the one roof.

In the Southern Queensland city of Toowoomba, Willows Health & Lifestyle Centre has established themselves as the 'go-to' gym in the area for all manner of health and wellness matters. Purchased by Troy and Susan Morgan, together with Dan and Renee Jauncey in 2008, they began work on transforming the existing gym and squash courts into a facility incorporating allied health partners alongside a traditional gym.

Managing director of Willows Health Group, Troy Morgan says that 'in addition to our traditional health centre we also have professional health suites within the centre itself, and they have their own reception. These include an exercise physiology studio, physiotherapy, an occupational therapy practice, dietitian practice, reformer Pilates studio and massage centre.'



We caught up with Troy and he happily shared some of the secrets behind transforming his gym facility into a successful community health and lifestyle centre.

Q **WNIF: Why did you decide to transform your traditional gym into a community health and lifestyle centre?**

TM: It was the movement in the market and also the tsunami of chronic disease that gave us the idea. We wanted to give people a fuller approach in treatment, being able to prescribe a pathway for them so they have a pathway of treatment rather than just a generic one size fits all approach.

Q **WNIF: Have you attracted more members using this model?**

TM: Yes, it's a little bit scary from a business point of view at times, especially when we suggest members to visit one of the exercise physiologists or a physiotherapist or their GP first, rather than sell them a gym membership.

Q **WNIF: What systems do you have in place to source members?**

TM: We put members through a performance screening process to find the best pathway for him or her, and sometimes that may mean that a traditional membership is not the best choice for them at the present time.

Q **WNIF: What challenges have you had to overcome?**

TM: Not only is it a bit scary going down a different pathway, but also getting the general public and the council to understand what you're trying to do. For example, the council said that we were no longer a 'fitness centre', so we had to change to being called a 'medical centre' before we were allowed to involve allied health staff. There were other requirements like that, which we had to meet too.

Q **WNIF: Are your staff put through any special training?**

TM: We put all of our staff, including our administration staff (we don't have sales staff), through a Level 1 Wellness Coaching Course so rather than using a sales type language we want to use a coaching style language from the very first moment we connect with clients.

Q **WNIF: What special programs do you offer?**

TM: We have two coaches that run the Safe Exercise for Women (SEFW) program and we also have links with the Continence Foundation of Australia and the Pelvic Floor First Project. We offer a SEFW membership that incorporates the pelvic floor first screening for all of our female members and includes specially run small group exercise classes, one-on-one and take home programs.

To find out more or to contact Troy Morgan visit www.willowshealth.com.au