



Dr. Canton Helps Predict the Future of Fitness and Exercise

Shaping Up

Fitness industry experts work out some answers to America's health problems.

Thomas J. Ryan

What's the solution to the nation's obesity epidemic? To answer this, SGB polled some industry experts who offer their views here on the future of fitness and exercise.

As expected, many of the solutions were high-tech. Some involve the incorporation of video games and the Internet into workouts. A recent push to use heart monitors while exercising may give way to tools that instantly read an individual's DNA and other vital measurements. Although liposuction and low-carb diets aren't considered long-term cures to restoring America's health, diet pills and other pharmaceutical blockbusters promise to enhance workouts and diets.

Other solutions are less futuristic, such as Tai Chi, water aerobics and walking. Indeed, experts concur that the key to reaching coach potatoes will be to make workouts simple, rewarding and fun.

But many also believe that it will take a strong commitment from parents, schools and the government to change people's lifestyles and encourage proper nutrition and exercise. These fitness experts readily acknowledge that America is losing the battle of the bulge.

"We haven't figured it out because the obese population keeps growing," laments Stephen Glass, a professor of exercise physiology at Grand Valley State University in Michigan.

Here, the experts weigh in on the future of fitness.

James Canton, Futurist

Canton, who's been prognosticating health enhancement for the past 25 years, is convinced that fitness will be revolutionized in the 21st century by four power tools: nano technology, cognitive science, biotechnology and IT.

"I'll be on a treadmill that is wirelessly connected and it's not just monitoring all my vitals, but it's analyzing my DNA," he says. "We will have stronger, more intelligent sports equipment that is changing with the exerciser and providing vital health information in real time."

According to Canton, this evolution will lead to more customized and efficient workouts, and will be driven by Baby Boomers. "They're going to redefine aging," he says. "They've got control of over \$14 billion in liquid assets, which is going to completely transform the sports equipment industry by forcing it to become more applicable to the aging Baby Boomer who wants to enhance health and longevity."

Regarding nutrition, Canton believes that understanding how each individual's biological and chemical makeup is affected by different foods will lead to healthier diets. New drugs will also likely play a vital role in eating right. "It might be a diet pill that senses your DNA and then makes modifications based on your specific nutritional needs," he notes. "We're just on the edge of this fusion between genetics and health."

Although pharmaceutical companies and emerging technologies will help, Canton questions whether these innovations will motivate people to change their lifestyles.

"We're still kind of in the dark ages," he says. "People don't know what foods to eat that are healthy, and they don't know what exercises are best for them. But they need to become more active and get their heart rates up."

Excerpted from Sporting Goods Business Magazine Article **Shaping Up** by Thomas Ryan