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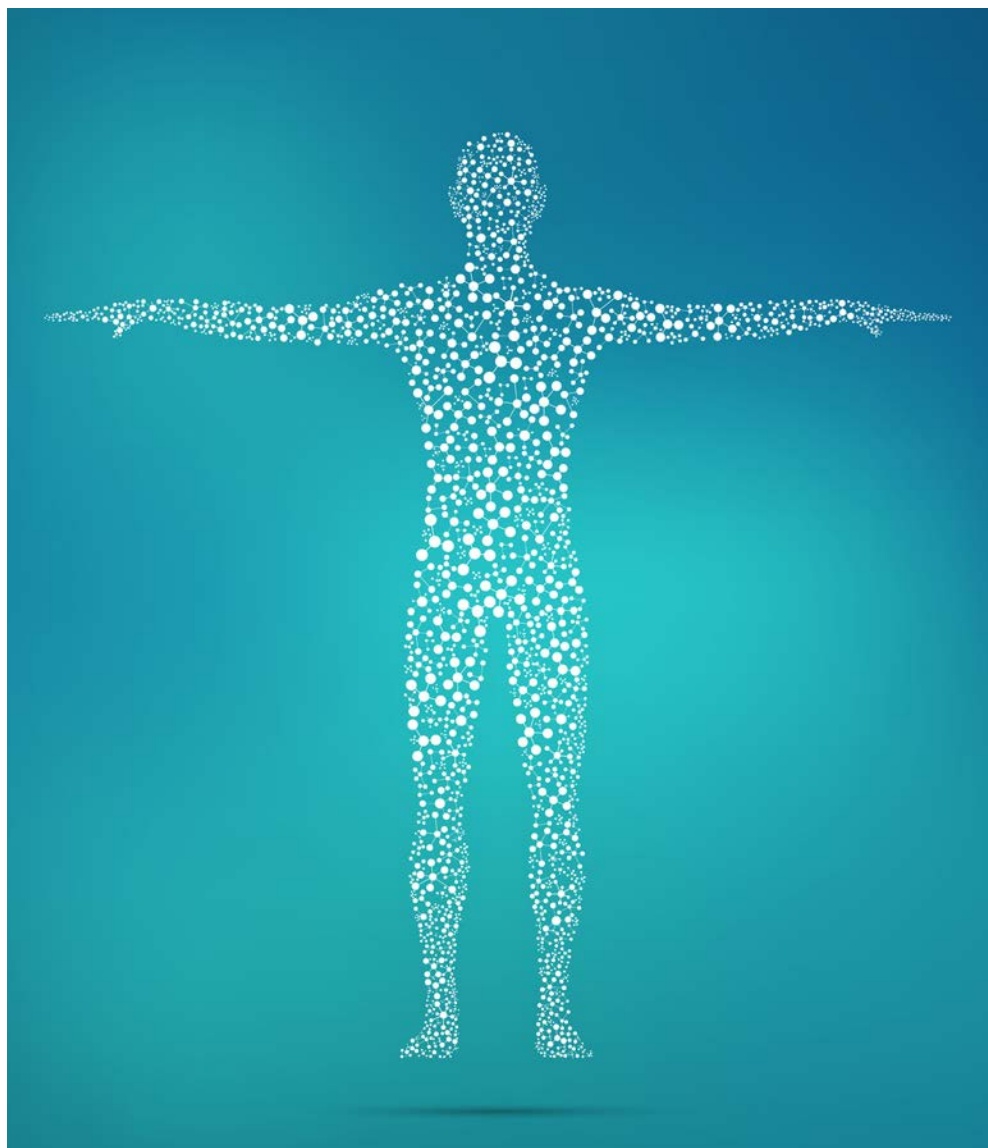
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ABOUT ATN

WE INFORM AND INSPIRE those who are out to disrupt the future of our rapidly evolving industry. Launched in 2020 at the intersection of fitness, wellness and technology, we cover topics as diverse as brick-and-mortar gyms, connected fitness products, boutique formats, outdoor exercise, equipment innovations, emerging technologies, wellness trends, and consumer insights. ✨ Our writers set out each day to deliver proprietary content and analysis that will help spark ideas and shape agendas for decision-makers in the fast-paced fitness space. ✨ We provide comprehensive and multi-platform coverage of the most impactful news and trends shaping the fitness and wellness segment, bringing together innovators, influencers and executives with content that sparks ideas, uncovers opportunities, and drives growth.

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“

Most people don't want to torture themselves to feel better,” — Steve Kuzara, Frost Locker



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“
We think over time recovery infrastructure is going to become its own asset class.” — Frank Britt, Aespace



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PERFORMANCE MINDSET



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GYMS GO ALL-IN

The wellness and recovery arms race is on. Gyms across every segment are expanding beyond saunas and massage chairs with advanced therapies, longevity offerings and integrated experiences

by Josh Libertore



AS AMENITIES such as saunas, massage chairs and massage guns have become table stakes inside just about every gym in America, operators are collectively taking the next step to implement more advanced wellness and recovery therapies inside the four walls of their facilities. ✨ High-value, low-price (HVLP) operators are pushing the boundaries of what members can expect from a “low-price” gym, while luxury operators innovate to stand out, adding services like hyperbaric oxygen chambers, in-club longevity clinics and AI-powered recovery tech. ✨ Here, ATN breaks down some of the ways operators are embedding wellness and recovery into their facilities, and what could be coming next in the years to come.

LOW-PRICE GYMS CLOSE THE GAP ON WELLNESS

As amenities such as saunas, massage chairs and massage guns have become table stakes inside just about every gym in America, the industry’s top high-value, low-price (HVLP) operators are pushing the boundaries of what members can expect, turning the notion of “low price” on its head.

At Amped Fitness, a fast-growing HVLP chain based in Florida, newly designed recovery rooms feature cold plunges from Chilly Goat Tubs, Evolt body composition scanners and red-light therapy booths, along with familiar favorites like Hyperice massage guns and Normatec leg compression boots.

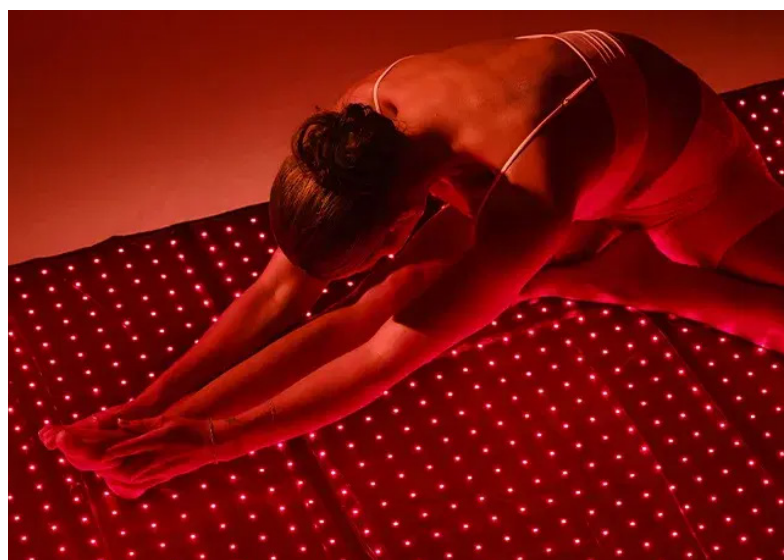
Across the board, HVLP operators are investing in cold therapy, with brands including EoS Fitness and Vasa Fitness adding cold-plunge tubs to their facilities.

But the recovery space is moving fast, and soon, traditional cold plunges might even be a thing of the past. That’s because waterless cold-therapy options are beginning to make their way inside low-price gyms, with Fitness Connection, an HVLP gym chain based in Texas, adding Frost Locker — a dry alternative to cold plunges — to some of its clubs.

Other HVLP gym operators have told ATN they’re exploring ways to add waterless cold-therapy options inside



“We see a real opportunity to make recovery technology more accessible by integrating it into the gym environment in a way that feels natural and approachable not exclusive or intimidating. This partnership is part of a much bigger shift in how we think about fitness clubs and the role they play in supporting overall well-being.” —Marc Diaper, Fitness First



▲ **Nike x Hyperice Hyperboot recovery shoes feature built-in dual-zone heat therapy and Normatec dynamic air compression.**

◀ **The Higher DOSE Full Body Red Light Mat.**

their clubs, potentially from Frost Locker, or from WellnessSpace Brands, whose PolarWave Dry Plunge simulates a full-body ice bath without water.

Operators and wellness executives say waterless cold-therapy options are attractive for their cost-saving benefits, operational ease compared to water-filled options and perhaps most importantly, their ease of use for members who might not want to get wet at the gym.

“Most people don’t want to torture themselves to feel better,” said Frost Locker’s engineering director, Steve Kuzara. “We built Frost Locker so people can step into a calm, cold space, relax, and still get the real physiological benefits.”

Beyond just offering better amenities, HVLP operators are also taking steps to



“We’ve always treated training and recovery as parts of a complete program that falls within our 4 pillars of movement, nutrition, regeneration and community. ... When fitness and recovery are designed together, members get more out of both.” —James Gu, Equinox



create calming sensory experiences for their members. At Crunch Fitness, new clubs built under the brand’s Crunch 3.0 template feature Relax & Recover studios that are closed off from the rest of the gym, featuring dimmed lighting, relaxing music and calming colors.

“It feels like a mini spa inside of the gym,” Crunch chief operating officer Molly Long told ATN. “We’ve got dimmed lighting, speakers that play soothing music and sound buffering with a glass door that can close off the space and separate it from the rest of the gym.”

Crunch has also said it’s exploring adding mindfulness and meditation-focused classes to its group exercise lineup, as well as potentially adding sound bath classes.

LUXURY CLUBS LEVEL UP WITH NEW MODALITIES, PERSONALIZED CARE

As HVL and mid-priced gyms offer increasingly impressive recovery spaces, luxury operators are taking things a step further to stand out, embracing both new modalities and personalized gym-as-a-clinic services.

Equinox is touting next-level wellness at its new Domino Park, Brooklyn, location. The club, which opened in late 2024, features hyperbaric oxygen therapy, dual red-light and halotherapy machines, and AI-powered robotic massages from Aescape.

Equinox is marketing its Domino Park club as more than just a fitness center, but a “sanctuary for regeneration and recovery.”

The luxury operator has hinted that oxygen-focused wellness amenities like hyperbaric chambers could become a bigger part of its clubs nationwide.

“Every system in the body thrives on oxygen,” Equinox director of spa James Gu said. “This therapy enhances cognitive function, circulation, sleep quality, skin health, and even immunity.” Whether you’re recovering from intense workouts or simply seeking an energy boost, hyperbaric oxygen therapy offers benefits that go far beyond the surface.”

Elsewhere, Henry’s Gymnasium in Seattle was among the world’s first operators to implement Frost Locker inside its club. The Washington-based operator also offers modalities including chromotherapy, which uses different

wavelengths of light to affect physical and mental well-being, and Cryo-Sauna therapy sessions, which alternate between cryotherapy for cold exposure and sauna for heat.

Life Time, meanwhile, is going all-in on personalized wellness: its Miora clinics offer weight loss medications such as GLP-1s, peptides, hormone replacement therapy and other popular wellness modalities including red light therapy.

The athletic country club operator currently operates Miora longevity centers in a handful of states, and founder and CEO Bahram Akradi has said Life Time plans to expand the concept “much more aggressively” across many markets by the end of this year.

Equinox, meanwhile, launched EQX Optimize, a \$40,000-per-year longevity-focused membership that includes Function biomarker testing, personal training sessions and consultations with health specialists.

OPERATORS ARE BUILDING RECOVERY INTO FITNESS CLASSES

Inside gyms, the next wave in wellness might come in the form of fitness classes that integrate recovery directly into the workout experience.

In April, CorePower Yoga announced it would offer classes that feature HigherDose near-infrared and red light LED panels installed along studio walls, allowing members to be exposed to the red light throughout the duration of a class.

In Los Angeles, boutique studio Burn Los Angeles is launching Build, a new concept that combines heavy strength training with red light in a single session. Burn has offered red light classes for years, one of the main pioneers of the now-popular concept.

On the big-box gym side, Fitness First U.K. added red-light-therapy yoga and Pilates classes, which utilize Bon Charge blankets.

“Recovery is becoming just as important to members as the workout itself,” said Fitness First CEO Marc Diaper. “People want fitness experiences that help them feel better, move better and switch off from increasingly busy lifestyles.”



“Recovery is becoming an integrated part of performance, as deliberate as the training itself. Equinox is ahead of that shift, building precision bodywork directly into how members train. This is where fitness and recovery converge, and where the category goes from here.” —Frank Britt, Aescape



“We see a real opportunity to make recovery technology more accessible by integrating it into the gym environment in a way that feels natural and approachable — not exclusive or intimidating,” Diaper added. “This partnership is part of a much bigger shift in how we think about fitness clubs and the role they play in supporting overall well-being.”

Equinox, meanwhile, is leveraging its partnership with Aescape to launch “Equinox Exclusives,” AI-powered massage sessions built around signature Equinox classes including strength training and running.

As part of the partnership, Equinox members will be able to book 15 to 30 minute Aescape massage sessions specifically tailored to their workout routines. The sessions, which were co-created with Equinox coaches, include ones like “Strength Recovery” class, which offers body work focused on the traps, scapula, erectors, glutes and hamstrings.

“Recovery is becoming an integrated part of performance, as deliberate as the training itself,” Aescape CEO Frank Britt told ATN. “Equinox is ahead of

that shift, building precision bodywork directly into how members train. This is where fitness and recovery converge, and where the category goes from here.”

Equinox’s Gu said the partnership represents the increasing convergence between workouts and recovery.

“We’ve always treated training and recovery as parts of a complete program that falls within our 4 pillars of movement, nutrition, regeneration and community,” he told ATN. “Building recovery into our program with Aescape, that’s specifically catered to how our members train, increases efficiency, accessibility and convenience. When fitness and recovery are designed together, members get more out of both.”

WHAT’S COMING NEXT?

Looking ahead, U.S. operators might look overseas for some inspiration.

The FIBO 2026 trade show, held earlier this year in Cologne, Germany, offered a glimpse into what wellness and recovery innovations might be coming next into America’s gyms and clubs.

▲ The APEX hypobaric chamber.

While familiar favorites like cryotherapy, infrared saunas and red light all featured at FIBO 2026, several emerging therapies turned heads as well.

High-altitude recovery machines were prominent — Turkish brand HPO Tech showcased its Apex Hypobaric Chamber (not to be confused with the more common hyperbaric chambers), while German brand Mitovit spotlighted its hypoxic training system (the brand counts longevity influencer Bryan Johnson among its users).

The benefits of altitude training are said to include increased red blood cell production, higher VO₂ max levels, faster recovery and improved muscle efficiency.

Meanwhile, WellFit showcased its booth that douses users in a full-body skincare mist pre or post-workout.

Gharieni Group, a Germany-based manufacturer of medical, spa and wellness equipment whose products can be found at luxury hotels and inside the locker rooms of sports teams including FC Schalke, showcased products like its Theragun-equipped robotic massage bed and a dry bed that mimics the effects of float therapy without water. ■

THE RISE OF INTEGRATED LONGEVITY

Leaders from Ultimate Longevity Center, together with Lifenforce and Ultimate Human, explain how data, diagnostics and integrated care are reshaping the future of longevity.

T

“THE LAST few years reminded people that no one else is managing their day-to-day biology.”

That’s how co-founder and chief scientific advisor of Ultimate Longevity Center, Gary Brecka explains a fundamental shift taking place across health and wellness.

Consumers are paying closer attention to their health than ever before, not just when something goes wrong, but in the day-to-day decisions that shape energy, recovery, performance and long-term wellbeing. Wearables, bloodwork, recovery metrics and other forms of personal health data have given people unprecedented visibility into their own biology, creating a level of awareness that didn’t exist a decade ago.

That awareness is changing expectations.

“People don’t want three separate relationships with three separate providers who never talk to each other,” says Don Michael, President of Ultimate Longevity Center. “They want one destination, one coherent protocol and one team that understands the whole picture.”

This mindset is accelerating the collapse of the traditional boundaries between fitness, healthcare and wellness, and fueling the emergence of businesses designed



around integration rather than specialization.

Ultimate Longevity Center, a wellness franchise created through a partnership between Sequel Brands, Gary Brecka’s Ultimate Human and premier clinician-led longevity platform Lifenforce, was built around that idea.

FROM REACTIVE HEALTHCARE TO PROACTIVE HEALTH

At the center of the convergence is a fundamental change in how consumers think about health itself.

“The conversation has completely flipped,” says Brecka.

“It used to be, ‘Wait until something breaks, then go find a

diagnosis.’ Now people are waking up to the fact that the body gives you signals long before it gives you symptoms.”

Brecka attributes that change to three forces: visibility, agency and outcomes.

“Wearables, continuous data and basic labs have pulled the curtain back,” he says. “And when you experience that level of feedback consistently - whether through consumer wearables or environments like Ultimate Longevity Center - it stops being theoretical and starts changing behavior fast.”

As consumers gain more insight into their health, they’re taking action.



This is not anti-medicine. This is pre-medicine. Use measurable routines to stabilize the system, watch the data respond and then layer in tools with precision.”—Gary Brecka, Ultimate Longevity Center



“Your light exposure, breath, movement, hydration, minerals, protein intake, meal timing, and sleep environment are all levers you can pull every single day,” Brecka says. “And when those levers move, energy, mood, cognition and recovery move with them.”

The final piece is outcomes.

“What we consistently see is that when you correct deficiencies, stabilize blood sugar, support circadian rhythm and match stress with recovery, you reduce the burden that eventually shows up as chronic disease,” he says. “When the system is regulated, the body performs. When it is dysregulated, you pay for it downstream.”

For Brecka, that represents a fundamentally different model than traditional healthcare.

“This is not anti-medicine. This is pre-medicine. Use measurable routines to stabilize the system, watch the data respond and then layer in tools with precision.”

That philosophy serves as the foundation for Ultimate Longevity Center, which was built around the idea that consumers need more than information, they need a clear path from awareness to action.

WHAT THE DATA REVEALS

If proactive health begins with awareness, diagnostics provide the roadmap.

Dugal Bain, CEO of LifeForce, says, “What comprehensive diagnostics actually reveal is the gap between where someone is and where they could be.”

Bain points to examples such as hormone deficiencies, chronic stress patterns and recovery issues that often go unnoticed for years despite affecting energy, sleep, performance and overall quality of life.

“I’ve seen members in their early 40s with free testosterone levels you’d expect in a 70-year-old, or cortisol patterns that explain exactly why their sleep and recovery have been deteriorating for years,” Bain says.

The value extends beyond a single test result.

“The other piece that matters is tracking over time,” he says. “A single snapshot has limited value. What changes the game is longitudinal data, where you’re watching biomarkers move in response to a specific intervention and adjusting accordingly.”

For consumers seeking more personalized health strategies, data has become both a starting point and a guide for action.

THE POWER OF INTEGRATION

As consumers become more engaged in their health, many have become frustrated by the fragmented nature of traditional wellness and healthcare experiences.



Fitness, recovery, diagnostics, hormone optimization and medical care have historically operated in separate silos, often requiring consumers to navigate multiple providers, platforms and recommendations on their own.

That philosophy became the foundation for Ultimate Longevity Center.

“When you bring red light therapy, cryotherapy, IV therapy, recovery modalities and

performance coaching under one roof with a unified philosophy, you’re no longer selling services,” Michael says. “You’re delivering a system.”

The distinction is important.

“The consumer gets outcomes, not transactions,” he says.

The goal of an integrated model is to create continuity between data, clinical guidance and in-person experiences.

“When a member walks into an Ultimate Longevity Center, their IV protocol isn’t a menu item they pick from a laminated card,” Bain says. “It’s informed by their bloodwork, their current health goals and what their clinician knows about their deficiencies and stress load.”

Rather than treating fitness, recovery and clinical care as separate experiences, the model is designed to connect them into a single, coordinated health journey.

Looking ahead, Michael believes three factors will define the most successful wellness and longevity businesses: personalization, proof and community. While all three are important, he believes community may ultimately be the most underestimated.

“The research on longevity is unambiguous. Social connection is as powerful a health variable as almost anything else you can measure,” he says.

That belief influenced the design of Ultimate Longevity Center from the beginning.

“The most successful wellness businesses five years from now won’t just be delivering protocols,” Michael says. “They’ll be delivering belonging.”

Members connect with one another, share progress and celebrate milestones together. Michael views those interactions as an essential part of the experience rather than a secondary benefit.

“In a world where people are increasingly isolated, that’s not a soft differentiator,” he says. “That’s a clinical one.” ●

HOW GOLD'S GYM TAMPA BUILT ONE OF THE MOST AMBITIOUS WELLNESS SPACES IN FITNESS

Gold's Gym Tampa Gas Worx and WellnessSpace Brands show what happens when operators build an integrated wellness space rather than simply adding recovery equipment.

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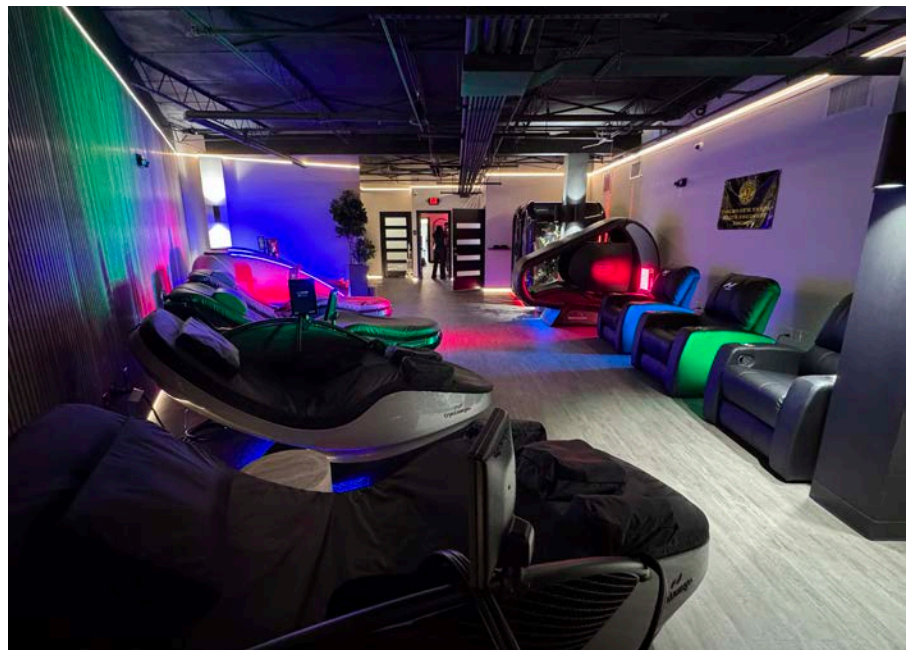
WALK INTO the new Recovery Lounge at Gold's Gym Tampa Gas Worx and it becomes immediately clear this isn't an amenity.

It's a destination.

From hyperbaric chambers and float pods to red light and infrared saunas, dry cold plunges and a carefully curated collection of recovery modalities, the space represents a significant investment in where the fitness industry is heading next.

The vision extends well beyond the equipment. Gold's Gym Tampa Gas Worx set out to build a comprehensive recovery experience that will help members perform better, recover smarter and make wellness a more intentional part of their everyday routine.

Bringing that vision to life required more than selecting modalities. The club partnered with WellnessSpace Brands, whose team helped guide everything from product selection and room flow to operational planning and design. The result is a wellness space designed to enhance member experience, utilization and long-term value for the business.



RECOVERY AS A WELLNESS LEVER

For Gold's Gym Tampa Gas Worx owner, Kimberlee Curtis, the project started with a simple belief: recovery deserves the same level of attention as training.

"Most gyms focus almost exclusively on the workout itself, but recovery is where adaptation, performance and long-term wellness really happen," she says.

Curtis wanted members to have access to the same types of technologies used by professional athletes and high performers, but in an environment that felt approachable and accessible.

Finding the right partner was critical. The team wanted proven technologies, but they also wanted guidance around how to integrate recovery into the broader club experience. According to Curtis, WellnessSpace Brands stood out

not only for its product portfolio, but for its understanding of how recovery and wellness spaces function operationally and how members interact with them.

"Whether someone is training hard, managing stress, recovering from an injury or simply looking to improve their overall well-being, we want them to have a space where they can slow down, recharge and take care of themselves," she says.

That philosophy shaped every aspect of the project, including the physical environment itself.

"We believed from the beginning that the environment is just as important as the technology," she says. "Anyone can place a few recovery devices in a corner of a gym, but that doesn't create the experience people are looking for today."

The team focused on design, lighting, flow and atmosphere, creating a space intentionally



Having a partner who understood not only the products but also how members interact with those products allowed us to make better decisions throughout the planning process.” —**Kimberlee Curtis**, Gold’s Gym Tampa



separated from the energy of the training floor.

“The goal is for members to walk in and immediately feel like they’ve stepped into a premium wellness environment rather than simply another area of the gym,” Curtis says.

BUILDING MORE THAN A RECOVERY ROOM

According to WellnessSpace Brands Southeast Regional Sales Manager, Sarah Pellegrino, the project succeeded because the Gold’s Gym Tampa Gas Worx team was committed from the beginning to creating something bigger than a collection of modalities.

“This project is near and dear to my heart,” Pellegrino says. “From day one, Kimberlee knew she wanted to make a huge splash into recovery.

Gold’s Gym Tampa Gas Worx ultimately invested in multiple units across the WellnessSpace Brands portfolio, including HydroMassage, CryoLounge+, RedZone Sauna, PolarWave Dry Plunge, and RelaxSpace Wellness Pod.

“What impressed us most was how comprehensive and thoughtfully designed the entire WellnessSpace ecosystem is,” Curtis says. “We weren’t looking for individual pieces of equipment. We were looking for a complete recovery solution.”

Curtis says the member journey, traffic flow, service mix, staffing considerations, operational procedures and overall experience also all play a significant role in long-term success.

Operational considerations were equally important. Reliability, ease of use, member adoption and staff training all factored into the decision-making process. According to Curtis, WellnessSpace Brands demonstrated a clear understanding of what it takes to successfully integrate recovery services into a fitness business, giving the team confidence



they were building a long-term solution rather than chasing a short-term trend.

“Having a partner who understood not only the products but also how members interact with those products allowed us to make better decisions throughout the planning process,” Curtis says. “That collaborative approach helped us create a space that functions well operationally while delivering the premium experience we envisioned.”

For Pellegrino, that type of collaboration is where many recovery projects either succeed or fall short.

“The member journey, flow, staffing and overall experience matter just as much as the products themselves,” she says.

The result is one of the most comprehensive recovery offerings in the Tampa market, featuring multiple WellnessSpace Brands technologies alongside additional recovery and wellness experiences under one roof.

RECOVERY AS A BUSINESS STRATEGY

While member experience drove the project, the Recovery Lounge also represents an important business opportunity.

“For us, member value comes first,” Curtis says. “We weren’t looking to create another add-on just for the sake of generating revenue.”

At the same time, she recognizes that member expectations are changing.

“The fitness industry continues to evolve, and members are increasingly looking for wellness solutions beyond traditional fitness equipment,” she says. “Recovery services are a natural extension of our mission.”

That combination of member value and business opportunity is what many operators are now trying to solve.

“When you deliver real value and real results, members are willing to invest in those services,” Curtis says. “That creates a sustainable revenue stream for the club while allowing us to continue investing in new amenities, equipment and experiences that benefit the entire membership base.”

The response has validated the strategy. Even before opening, members were asking questions and following the project’s progress.

“What we’ve seen is that people are becoming much more educated about the importance of recovery,” Curtis says. “Members understand that fitness is no longer just about working harder — it’s also about recovering smarter.”

For Pellegrino, seeing the completed wellness space and member reaction reinforced what recovery can become when operators fully commit to the concept.

“Working the grand opening and seeing how excited the members are and how proud the team is was the cherry on top of one of the most meaningful projects I’ve ever worked on.” ●

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE LONGEVITY MOVEMENT?

As longevity becomes an \$8 trillion opportunity, brands across fitness, healthcare, beauty and diagnostics are racing to define what the movement looks like.

by Courtney Rehfeldt



AS THE SAYING GOES, there are two certainties in life: death and taxes. ✨ If the longevity movement has its way, one of those will be up for debate. ✨ Consumers, many of whom don't have a diabetic diagnosis, are now sporting continuous glucose monitors. Others are flirting with NAD+, investing in smart sleep mattresses and drawing their own blood at home and sending it off via snail mail to check their biomarkers. ✨ Longevity is now a household term, and everyone wants in. ✨ UBS predicts the longevity industry will be worth \$8 trillion by 2030, spanning health-care innovation, wellness and lifestyle spending. It's also why beauty conglomerates, drug and supplement makers, blood-testing startups and gym operators are all suddenly speaking the same language. ✨ But bigger markets attract more competitors, and brands of every kind are slapping the word "longevity" onto their marketing materials. The space is getting crowded, which raises the real question. ✨ What happens next as everyone chases the same \$8 trillion?

THE BRYAN JOHNSON OF IT ALL

No one embodies the movement more than Bryan Johnson, the tech entrepreneur who has turned his own body into a longevity science experiment, publicly documenting his journey and protocols. He's behind Blueprint, a \$60 million-funded lifespan brand backed by a slew of notable investors, but even the most measured man alive can't out-optimize biology.

Johnson recently revealed he had been diagnosed with autoimmune gastritis, a chronic condition with no cure. And, as entrepreneurs are wont to do, he pivoted quickly, keeping a positive, "this is just another problem to fix" perspective.

"Getting diagnosed with an incurable disease is the best thing to happen to me in a long time," he shared on social media. "My project shifted overnight from longevity staples to disease resolution and frontier biotech. We have so many awesome things cooking."

If there's one signal to take from Johnson's discovery and health struggle, it's that the next phase of longevity may be as much about testing for what's lurking beneath a seemingly strong foundation of health as it is about optimization.

BEAUTY GETS A LONGEVITY FACELIFT

For an industry that has long preyed on fears of aging, it's no surprise the beauty industry has set out to rebrand everything under the banners of self-care and longevity, starting from the roots of your head with hair-longevity serums.

Novo Nordisk CEO Mike Doustdar told Bloomberg that his company, behind some of the blockbuster GLP-1 medications, may already be in a bit of a longevity game, thanks to research suggesting semaglutide protects organs beyond what is needed for weight loss. He said he would consider moving into skincare and hair loss, too.



▲ Growing awareness around light therapy has created new opportunities.

Beauty is meeting the moment from the other direction, signaling its seriousness as it mingles with those in white coats. Lancôme's new Absolute Longevity MD line, backed by a physician advisory board and skin-biomarker scanning technology, launched at a dermatology conference rather than a beauty trade show.

Med-spa chains, for their part, are chasing the same consumer. LaserAway has found traction with NAD+ and glutathione after piloting the services in its locations, and founder and CEO Scott Heckmann says the rise of weight loss medications has sent many patients flocking to self-care services.

“Across our clinics, we’ve seen a steady increase in patients who’ve completed the first phase of transformation and are now seeking refinement. They’re asking about noninvasive treatments that help them look refreshed and balanced, from skin tightening and collagen stimulation to laser resurfacing and body contouring.”

— Scott Heckmann, LaserAway





“Peptides are at an inflection point. What Cindy [Yan, co-founder] and I saw firsthand was that demand was accelerating far faster than the systems around quality, guidance and access. As regulation catches up to the category, there’s a need for infrastructure that makes peptides safe, legible and scalable.”

—Delphine Le Grand, Protocole



“Across our clinics, we’ve seen a steady increase in patients who’ve completed the first phase of transformation and are now seeking refinement,” Heckman told Athletech News. “They’re asking about noninvasive treatments that help them look refreshed and balanced, from skin tightening and collagen stimulation to laser resurfacing and body contouring.”

BLOOD TESTING’S CROWDED FIELD

Few corners of the longevity space have moved faster than personalized blood testing.

Function Health, which raised \$298 million at a \$2.5 billion valuation, acquired imaging startup Ezra and then bought at-home testing company Getlabs. Function co-founder Jonathan Swerdlin sees it as a way to enable “eight billion people to live 100 healthy years.”

Hims & Hers, Rhythm, Superpower, Hone Health and Whoop all offer their own competing biomarker platforms, but the real fight ahead is not who can test the most biomarkers, but who can turn testing into a habit consumers stick with.

Johnson entered the fray himself this spring with Blueprint’s own biomarker testing platform, priced to match Function’s \$365 annual membership.

Once everyone offers roughly the same panel at around the same price, the real question is who gets closest to skipping the lab altogether.

PEPTIDES: ALL BUZZ, LITTLE CLARITY

The peptide boom has left many wishing they had paid better attention back in biology class. Everyone is talking about peptides, but few can actually explain what they do, according to a New Consumer report.

The same report revealed that Google searches for peptides have exploded in 2026, yet only 41% of Gen Z and Millennials and just 19% of Gen X and older say they actually understand them.

That being said, confusion has not slowed demand, with franchise chains like 4Ever Young offering peptides alongside GLP-1s and hormone optimization.

It’s also becoming an exclusive space, one that Protocole is hoping to fill. The startup emerged from stealth this year with a \$6 million seed round and a velvet-rope approach, in which existing members must vouch for new ones. The platform pairs clinician-overseen peptide protocols and launched with a waitlist that reportedly ran thousands deep.

“Peptides are at an inflection point,” said co-founder Delphine Le Grand. “What Cindy [Yan, co-founder] and I saw firsthand was that demand was accelerating far faster than the systems around quality, guidance and access. As regulation catches up to the category, there’s a need for infrastructure that makes peptides safe, legible and scalable.”

◀ Everyone is talking about peptides but few actually understand what they are.

LONGEVITY’S FRANCHISE MOMENT

If beauty found its longevity angle and blood testing found its price war, franchising found a way to sell the dream at scale.

Anthony Geisler’s Sequel Brands, working with human biologist Gary Brecka and precision health platform LifeForce, launched Ultimate Longevity Center this spring and sold 200 franchise territories to 70 owners in just four months.

“People are confused about longevity,” Geisler told ATN of his reasoning for creating Ultimate Longevity Center. “The number one question Gary gets all the time is, ‘How do I get started?’” So what I see isn’t a

“People are confused about longevity. The number one question Gary [Brecka] gets all the time is, ‘How do I get started?’ So what I see isn’t a crowded space. I see a lot of complexity and confusion. We’re going to solve that confusion, and we’re going to do it face to face in your local retail shopping center next to your Starbucks.”

—Anthony Geisler, Sequel Brands



crowded space. I see a lot of complexity and confusion. We’re going to solve that confusion, and we’re going to do it face to face in your local retail shopping center next to your Starbucks.”

Meanwhile, UFC Gym partnered with NexGen MD Scientific on PWR Clinics. The co-branded concept will be built within existing gym locations in Torrance and Corona, California, with additional sites in development, bringing access to peptide therapy, GLP-1 programs, and hormone replacement therapy.

WHO OUTLASTS?

Death and taxes may still be certain, but longevity has made one more thing certain too — that everyone from Big Pharma to your gym now wants a piece of it. The real test over the next few years will be who is left standing as the go-to name in their corner of the field, and much like we’ve seen in fitness, it’s safe to assume that we can expect some consolidation. ■



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FIT (Functional Inspired Training) House of Brands is a global fitness franchise company with a network of over 1,500 studios across over 55 countries. FIT provides franchisees with proven business models, operational support, and structured training programs across its house of brands.

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WHY METABOLIC TESTING IS BECOMING A BUSINESS STRATEGY

Positioned at the intersection of longevity and personalization, VO2 Master is delivering the metabolic testing gyms and studios need to improve coaching outcomes, optimize retention and boost revenue.

F

FOR YEARS metabolic testing lived primarily in hospitals, elite sports labs and university research settings. Today, it is steadily making its way onto gym floors, into boutique studios and inside longevity-focused wellness businesses.

The shift reflects two trends. Consumers are becoming more interested in acquiring accurate data about their bodies to better reach their goals. At the same time, operators are looking for differentiators that help them stand out in an increasingly crowded market.

According to Peter O'Brien, CEO and co-inventor of the VO2 Master Analyzer, those trends are creating an opportunity that goes well beyond offering another assessment. Metabolic testing, he explains, has become both a coaching tool and a business asset.

"Metabolic data like cardiovascular efficiency and resting metabolism is being used proactively to guide healthier, longer lives now," he says. "The number of people doing this will continue to grow worldwide because the evidence that these metrics are directly tied to long term wellbeing and quality of life is clear.



FROM ESTIMATES TO ACCURACY

Consumer awareness of metabolic health has accelerated dramatically as conversations around longevity, preventive health and personalized fitness have entered the mainstream.

"Global searches for 'metabolic health' have increased by approximately 350 percent over the past year," O'Brien said. "Consumers are becoming much more interested in understanding their health specifically so they can see precisely how they are progressing with their fitness and training goals."

Interest extends beyond metabolic health generally. Searches for VO2 max have climbed roughly 150 percent over the past five years, fueled by everything from podcasts and physicians to health influencers

and social media discussions about longevity and performance.

That growing curiosity is changing member expectations.

"Consumers increasingly expect personalized, data-driven insights rather than generic fitness advice," O'Brien said.

For operators, the opportunity lies in providing information members cannot get from a smartwatch or fitness ring alone.

"Wearables estimate metabolic metrics using signals measured through the skin like heart rate," he said. "VO2 Master directly measures the oxygen you breathe through your lungs, providing accurate physiological data such as VO2 max and submax, ventilatory thresholds and heart rate zones that cannot be directly measured from the wrist or finger."

The technology provides operators with several key physiological metrics that can



Instead of relying on heart rate estimates and out of date methods, operators can provide precise physiological data that enables more personalized coaching, better decision-making and optimal results.” —Peter O’Brien, VO2



directly inform programming. VO2 max and submax testing measure aerobic capacity and cardiovascular efficiency, while resting metabolic rate (RMR) testing shows how many calories an individual burns at rest. It also establishes personalized training zones, allowing coaches to prescribe exercise intensity using measured physiology rather than estimated heart rate formulas. Those measurements allow coaches to track improvements over time and demonstrate measurable progress.

The health implications extend beyond athletic performance.

O’Brien believes metabolic metrics will increasingly become standard indicators of long-term health.

“We’re moving toward a future where metabolic metrics become as common as heart rate or blood pressure, but with far more individualized insight,” he said. “As longevity, preventive health and personalized fitness continue to grow, more people will know their precise VO2 max, resting metabolic rate and other key metabolic indicators.”

For operators serving aging populations, active adults and health-conscious consumers, that positions metabolic testing as a service that supports both fitness performance and broader wellness goals.

TURNING DATA INTO ACQUISITION & RETENTION

While the health benefits may attract initial interest, O’Brien believes the bigger opportunity for operators is what happens after the first assessment.

Rather than functioning as a one-time fitness test, metabolic testing creates an ongoing coaching relationship built around measurable improvement.

“Metabolic testing positions a facility as an industry thought leader in the eye of the client,”

he said. “Instead of relying on heart rate estimates and out of date methods, operators can provide precise physiological data that enables more personalized coaching, better decision-making and optimal results.”

That approach naturally supports recurring engagement.

“It helps develop strong long-term coaching relationships because the testing-training-retest tracking and progress continues over years,” O’Brien said.

For operators competing in saturated fitness markets, that continuity can become a meaningful differentiator.

“The biggest challenge is simply being committed to promoting the service,” O’Brien said. “Operators who actively talk about metabolic testing, educate members on its benefits and make testing visible in their facility see excellent adoption.”

From there, referrals often begin to drive additional participation.

“Once members understand the value and experience a test, word-of-mouth becomes a powerful driver,” he said.

To help operators communicate that value, VO2 Master provides marketing materials, educational content, customer case studies and examples from facilities already offering testing services.

BUILDING A NEW REVENUE STREAM

The business model is already proving itself in the field. DexaFit, a global network of sports performance and body composition labs delivering data-driven insights to athletes, fitness professionals and health-focused consumers, uses the VO2 Master Analyzer as its core metabolic testing solution for both VO2 max and resting metabolic rate assessments.

At DexaFit Scottsdale, owner Chris Brubaker says the technology has become an important contributor to the business.



“We did just over 400 different assessments using the VO2 Master, representing about \$40,000 in revenue,” Brubaker said. “It’s been instrumental in the success of our location.”

Unlike many laboratory-grade metabolic systems, O’Brien says the analyzer requires a comparatively modest upfront investment and does not carry mandatory monthly subscription fees, helping operators keep ongoing costs low.

Operationally, he says implementation is designed to be straightforward.

A single trained coach can administer tests, with onboarding supported through videos, educational resources and live question-and-answer sessions. Routine maintenance primarily involves replacing the oxygen sensor annually, while the analyzer hardware itself is built for years of use.

Although metabolic testing remains relatively uncommon today, O’Brien believes the window for early adopters may not remain open indefinitely.

“It’s a differentiator today and consumer demand is growing significantly on a global scale,” he said, noting that VO2 Master Analyzers are now used in 52 countries. “As more people learn about metabolic health and expect personalized fitness services, operators that don’t offer metabolic testing risk falling behind.” ●

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a black, spiky massage ball against their leg. The hand is positioned with the thumb and index finger gripping the top of the ball, while the other fingers are spread out. The ball is covered in numerous small, black, conical spikes. The leg is visible on the right side of the frame, showing the skin texture and the ball's contact point. The background is a plain, light gray.

Industry leaders say recovery is evolving from a collection of standalone modalities into an integrated strategy built on personalization, science and operational value.

by Kim Kisner

WHY THE FUTURE OF RECOVERY IS BIGGER THAN ANY ONE MODALITY

RECOVERY IS ENTERING ITS NEXT PHASE. ✨ What was once considered a niche offering reserved for elite athletes and biohackers is quickly becoming a core part of the fitness and wellness experience, showing up everywhere from health clubs and recovery studios to student housing, corporate campuses and mixed-use developments. ✨ That evolution was the focus of the “Recovery 2.0: What Comes After the Cold Plunge?” panel at the ATN Innovation Summit 2026, where leaders from across the fitness and wellness industry discussed how consumer expectations, technology and science are reshaping the category.



While modalities like cold therapy, red light and IV therapy continue to gain traction, panelists agreed the next phase of recovery is less about individual devices and more about creating personalized, evidence-based experiences that fit seamlessly into everyday life.

“People have a different relationship with their bodies today,” said Frank Britt, the CEO of AI-powered robotic massage company Aescape. “It used to be a counterintuitive idea that rest is a type of performance. Now there is an understanding that recovery is where you get the gains.”

That mindset shift is changing the way

consumers approach fitness altogether.

“I think if you look at the younger generation, they have a tendency to actually skip the workout part and go straight to recovery,” said Steve Kuzara, the CEO of Frost Locker, which makes a waterless cold-therapy machine. “You can see that across the data.”

For Kristin Smithers of hydrotherapy and red-light maker Wellssystem, the rise of recovery has been fueled by accessibility and word of mouth.

“There’s such a huge demand for wellness,” she said. “These services are in more places, they’re easier to access, people experience the benefits and then they tell their friends.”

“There’s such a huge demand for wellness. These services are in more places, they’re easier to access, people experience the benefits and then they tell their friends.”

—Kristin Smithers, Wellssystem



“Consumers are moving from device-centricity to protocol. They’re going to need consultative support, similar to working with a nutritionist, to determine the right combination of recovery tools for their health.” —Frank Britt, Aescape

FROM DEVICES TO PROTOCOLS

Perhaps the biggest takeaway from the discussion was that recovery is no longer defined by any single modality.

Whether through contrast therapy, red light, AI-powered bodywork or personalized recovery protocols, the industry is moving toward a more integrated model where science, technology and thoughtful design work together to help people move better, recover smarter and build healthier habits for the long term.

Consumers, in turn, are increasingly thinking about recovery as a combination of tools working together to support overall health and performance.

“I think consumers are moving from device-centricity to protocol,” Britt said. “They’re going to need consultative support, similar to working with a nutritionist, to determine the right combination of recovery tools for their health.”

He believes the next generation of wellness spaces will be built around intelligence and data, connecting devices and services into personalized recovery programs rather than isolated experiences.

The same evolution is shaping decisions inside fitness clubs and wellness spaces.

Matt Delaney, the senior director of equipment and program innovation for Equinox, said recovery has become an important part of member expectations, but adding new modalities isn’t enough.

“You don’t want to compete just on amenities,” Delaney said. “Your core experience needs to be high level, and then you have to ask: Is there efficacy? Is there a tangible, beneficial experience? And can we execute it?”

There is also greater scrutiny around the technologies themselves as operators look beyond marketing claims to measurable outcomes.

Smithers noted that growing awareness around red light therapy has created both opportunity and confusion.

“A \$20 unit that you can buy online isn’t going to be the same as a commercial-grade unit in a spa or fitness facility,” she said. “Everything out there is not the same.”

Delaney echoed that: “There’s a big

▼ Automated massages have become a key component of recovery offerings.



difference between science-based and evidence-based,” he said. “Those words are not interchangeable.”

THE BUSINESS OF RECOVERY

Commercial operators are also approaching recovery through a business lens, evaluating how new offerings contribute to member experience while maximizing the value of every square foot.

According to Britt, AI-powered recovery technologies have the potential to dramatically increase the productivity of wellness spaces while reducing reliance on labor-intensive service models.

“We think over time recovery infrastructure is going to become its own asset class,” Britt said, describing a future where dedicated recovery spaces generate significant value from previously underutilized square footage.

Meanwhile, Frost Locker is seeing recovery expand to new environments.

“There’s a big difference between science-based and evidence-based. Those words are not interchangeable.”

Matt Delaney, Equinox



Kuzara said the company’s business was once driven primarily by fitness facilities but is now growing rapidly within mixed-use developments, universities, corporate campuses, fire stations and wellness hubs.

“We see a massive explosion with mixed-use facilities,” he said.

Perhaps the biggest takeaway from the discussion was that recovery is no longer defined by any single modality.

Whether through contrast therapy, red light, AI-powered bodywork or personalized recovery protocols, the industry is moving toward a more integrated model where science, technology and thoughtful design work together to help people move better, recover smarter and build healthier habits for the long term. ■



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THE NEW NIGHTLIFE IS AT THE GYM

Wellness is taking over the weekend as a growing number of Gen Z and Millennials ditch alcohol.

by Courtney Rehfeldt



THE NIGHT OUT IS CHANGING. People are still looking for a release at the end of the week or even in the middle of it, but many are no longer chasing it at bars. They're chasing it in cycle studios and meditation rooms, surrounded by like-minded strangers-turned-friends who would rather track their sleep than ruin it.

Bay Club vice president and general manager Penny Love calls it “wellness clubbing” (it’s also known as “soft clubbing”), a catch-all for pop-up social mixers that has crept into the fitness world fast and turned gyms and health clubs into the kind of social spaces that once belonged to nightlife.

It’s a shift she has seen accelerate across Bay Club, an operator of sports, recreation and active lifestyle clubs on the West Coast that’s backed by KKR and is expanding rapidly.

“This type of focus on wellness used to be confined to spas and retreats where people could go away for a day of beauty or a weekend retreat to renew their goals,” Love told Athletech News. “It has now been reimagined to apply to our daily routines.”

Bay Club leaned in early, hosting weekly pop-up classes such as Silent Disco Dance classes and Sound Bath Healing workshops, along with monthly themed events like October’s Silent Cycle Halloween Rave. Love pointed to Partner Yoga, Tai Chi massage workshops and Sound Bath Healing Meditations as formats that consistently fill.

“We offer fitness challenges where members and students can compete over the course of a week or month, in a friendly way, to meet their fitness goals, with prizes going to the winner’s charity of their choice,” she said. “Most classes are sold out as soon as the reservation window opens.”

Bay Club members are encouraged to bring friends as guests, creating a social atmosphere that goes beyond the club’s immediate membership.

It also somewhat aligns with the company’s shared membership model, a unique feature that lets people build their own inner circle by joining with up to ten others on one membership.

The community piece is part of it, but the real driver is who’s showing up and why.

“It is definitely a cross-generational phenomenon,” Love said. “Both Gen Z and Millennials are over the ‘stay up all night’ model, which feels unaffordable and not worth it. Both generations are opting for more sustainable lifestyle choices and combining them to get the fun without the fatigue.”

The shift in priorities also shows up

▼ Bay Club hosts weekly pop-up events such as Silent Disco Dance classes and Sound Bath Healing workshops.



in what people are consuming when they socialize, and maybe more so in what they aren’t. While traditional nightlife relies on alcohol as the connector, Love notes that younger adults are choosing to optimize rather than unwind the old-fashioned way.

“Alcohol is definitely out, especially with Gen Z,” Love said, adding that she’s seeing the younger generation increasingly opt for energy drinks and protein smoothies instead.

“They are also into the upgraded add-ins to the smoothies — spirulina, creatine, collagen powder, bee pollen, chia seeds and maca,” she said. “This is fueled by the relatively recent trend in young adults to hack their fitness and health routines with devices like Whoop and other innovative sleep and fitness tracking apps.”

As alcohol consumption continues to drop and wellness becomes a bigger part of people’s identity, the night out edit gives gyms, studios and health clubs a new channel to attract consumers.

And according to Love, it has staying power.

“This fad is so much more sustainable than the party-all-night model that was prevalent pre-pandemic,” she said. “I believe that Gen Z is the innovator of this trend by default after the pandemic, and the Millennials are hopping on the wagon with a renewed goal of reinventing themselves through it.”

“**Both Gen Z and Millennials are over the ‘stay up all night’ model, which feels unaffordable and not worth it.**” — Penny Love, Bay Club





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60 MINUTES OF SILENCE IS ALL IT TAKES TO BUILD A BOOMING WELLNESS BUSINESS

By offering the much needed reset so many need today, SWTHZ contrast therapy attracts members from every walk of life

W

WHEN JAMIE WEEKS started SWTHZ, the pitch was simple. He wanted to build a place where a person could take one hour, just four percent of their day, for themselves, each day. That was it, and it had almost nothing to do with fitness.

"That vision is what pulled me in," said Nico Varano, CEO of SWTHZ. "I heard it before I owned anything, signed on as the brand's first franchisee and later took the

role of CEO. And the first thing I noticed once I opened my studios in Boston was who walked through the door. It wasn't who I expected."

Varano assumed his members would look like the people you see at a boutique gym – type A individuals, already with established wellness and gym routines. However, a large share of his early members weren't your typical fitness enthusiasts.

"They weren't training for anything," Varano said. "Some of them hadn't set foot in a gym in years, and a few never had. They came because they were tired, stressed and carrying more than they could put down at the end of the day. They didn't want a workout, just an hour to feel like a person again."

ATTRACTING THE 'NON-FITNESS' PEOPLE

Despite the initial shock, Varano later realized that when you build for that hour, the door opens to a much wider group than what the fitness industry usually attracts. That includes executives killing time between meetings or before the day swallows them, healthcare workers coming off long shifts, remote workers who need to draw a line between themselves and work, and parents just longing for a lone hour to themselves.

"None of these people are looking for a gym," Varano said. "A gym asks something of you the second you walk in. There is a floor full of people who look like they belong there. There





The fitness industry has spent decades competing over the same slice of people who already identify as athletes. Recovery does not fight over that slice.”—Nico Varano, SWTHZ



are mirrors. There is the quiet pressure to perform. We take all of that out. Our model is private suites, by appointment. You walk in, you have your own space, you move through contrast therapy on your own terms, and you leave. There's no crowd, mirror wall or anybody watching.”

Nevertheless, SWTHZ by no means turns away fitness consumers looking to recover after a heavy gym session, stay loose through a marathon build or keep up during HYROX season. For them, contrast therapy isn't a break from training, but a piece of their programming and a prerequisite for bouncing back from the next workout instead of nursing a prior one.

“That is the part most people miss,” Varano said. “Recovery is not the opposite of fitness; it's the thing that lets you keep doing it. The athlete training for a race and the person who has never touched a barbell want the same hour for different reasons, and they end up in the same suite. Almost nothing else in this space pulls both.”

RECOVERY DOESN'T SPLIT, BUT GROWS THE MARKET

According to Varano, recovery's ability to serve both “fitness” and “non-fitness” people puts the wellness market in a position where steady expansion is a near certainty.

“Most Americans do not belong to a gym and never will,” he said. “The fitness industry has spent decades competing over the same slice of people who already identify as athletes. Recovery does not fight over that slice. It serves the athlete and the burned-out parent at the same time, which means the market stops being a slice at all. It becomes almost everyone.”

The current focus on mental health promises to propel sector growth as well. SWTHZ has positioned itself to supply the demand for a concentrated mental break, which has arguably never



been higher, especially as more consumers seek opportunities to undergo daily digital detoxes.

“We are all reachable every hour of the day, and the cost of that is starting to show,” Varano said.

“A contrast therapy session is one of the rare windows where the phone goes away. You cannot scroll in a cold plunge. The heat and the cold demand that you are present in your own body, which is a feeling a lot of people have not had in a while.”

Once seen as something to be proud of, being reachable 24/7 is now a known liability for long-term health. SWTHZ is proud to defend that hour members need to disconnect.

“We did not set out to sell a digital detox, but that is part of what members are buying,” Varano said. “One hour of being unreachable, on purpose, has become its own kind of status. We happen to be one of the few places that protect it. That is exactly the hour we built this around.”

THE SWTHZ DIFFERENCE & FUTURE

Although other wellness brands offer their own means of disconnecting, SWTHZ's approach differs in its commitment to hospitality.

“We obsess over how the hour feels,” Varano said. “You walk in and it is clean, private, calm and handled, every single time. That consistency is the product. It is

what earns the next visit and the one after that. A lot of the industry leads with the room. We lead with what the hour does for you and we let the result bring people back.”

Going forward, SWTHZ intends to turn that hour into something members acknowledge as a necessity in their health-related routines to an even greater extent. It aims to do so by applying additional structure through tech.

“Most people still treat recovery as something you reach for when you feel run down,” Varano said. “We want it to be something you do on purpose, on a schedule, the way you would never skip brushing your teeth. That starts with real protocols. Not guesswork about how long to sit in the sauna or when to plunge, but a clear sequence built around what a member is actually after, whether that's better sleep, less stress or bouncing back from training.”

Varano shared SWTHZ is currently “building toward” offering Resilience Scores, which allow members to track their consistency and watch their work add up over time.

“Serious athletes already live by their numbers,” Varano said. “We think everyone else deserves the same feedback loop, because nothing keeps a habit alive like seeing it pay off. The goal has not changed. Sessions are still one hour a day, four percent, except now, they compound. Every session builds on the last, and the score in your hand is the proof.” ●

HOSPITALITY IS REWRITING THE WELLNESS PLAYBOOK

Hospitality leaders are using wellness to drive revenue, loyalty and guest engagement, offering lessons fitness operators can apply

by Kim Kisner



FOR HOSPITALITY LEADERS, wellness has become a business strategy for attracting a different kind of customer. ✨ Across two Athletech Innovation Summit 2026 sessions — “Powering the Wellness Ecosystem” and “Beyond the Spa: How Luxury Hotels Are Redefining Wellness” — executives from Proper Hospitality, Therme Group, OneSpaWorld, Equinox Hotels, Aman New York and Montage International described how investments in recovery, sleep, personalization and social wellness are generating measurable business results, from higher average daily rates and increased group bookings to stronger guest loyalty and new opportunities for growth.

The discussions also offered an important takeaway for the broader fitness industry. Hospitality brands are weaving wellness into nearly every aspect of the guest experience, creating environments that feel intentional, personalized and designed around high-performance living.

“We’re attracting a different kind of customer,” said Jamie Mark, senior vice president of membership, partnerships and PR at Proper Hospitality. “They’re more engaged with the hotel, the amenities and the overall experience.”

Mark said the company’s wellness investments have delivered significant returns, from increased room revenue after converting hotel rooms into recovery spaces to higher average daily rates, stronger group business and increased engagement from both members and local guests. Wellness, he said, has also become a compelling story for developers and the media, creating ongoing opportunities to generate attention and visibility.

Robert Hammond, president and chief Strategy officer of Therme Group, described a similar business opportunity from a different perspective. “Guests typically stay for three to five hours, so it’s almost like a staycation,” he said. “This creates opportunities to introduce new wellness concepts, pilot technologies and partner with brands looking to reach an engaged audience.”



▲ Inside a performance wellness room at the Proper Hotel in Santa Monica.

▼ An outdoor wooden barrel sauna.

“We’re attracting a different kind of customer. They’re more engaged with the hotel, the amenities and the overall experience.” —Jamie Mark, Proper Hospitality



Therme has already begun testing offerings such as personalized body-scanning technology, using the extended guest experience as a platform for both innovation and discovery.

WELLNESS AS A BUSINESS STRATEGY

That business-first mindset was echoed throughout both panels.

Rather than asking which wellness amenity should come next, speakers focused on how wellness could influence nearly every business metric that matters, from guest acquisition and retention to revenue, loyalty and brand differentiation.

For many brands, that begins with design.

Panelists repeatedly emphasized that successful wellness environments aren’t simply built around equipment or treatments. They’re carefully designed to shape how guests feel from the moment they arrive. At Aman New York, wellness





“**Today’s cruise guests expect the same performance-based wellness experiences they enjoy at home.**”—Tim Dux, OneSpaWorld.



extends beyond the spa into elements like lighting, fireplaces, blackout shades and calming architectural details that create a sense of tranquility throughout the property. At Proper Hospitality, wellness spaces are designed with the same level of attention as the hotel’s restaurants and public spaces.

The goal, several speakers said, is to create environments where wellness feels integrated into the property’s DNA instead of confined to a fitness center or spa.

Personalization emerged as another defining theme.

Luxury travelers expect hotels to understand their preferences, but panelists emphasized that gathering guest data is only the first step. What matters is how that information is used to make each stay feel more personal.

Fabian Odry, director of sales and marketing at Aman New York, noted that “Technology should remain largely invisible to the guest, with CRM data and personalization happening behind the scenes while maintaining a distinctly human experience.”

That same philosophy extends to AI. Rather than replacing hospitality

teams, panelists described AI as a tool that can automate operational tasks, simplify staff training and surface guest insights, allowing employees to spend more time where it matters most: creating meaningful guest interactions. Montage International is exploring AI-powered training systems that help associates build personalized wellness journeys for guests while reducing administrative work behind the scenes.

THE NEW PLAYBOOK FOR GUEST EXPERIENCE

Recovery, meanwhile, continues to evolve from a niche offering into an expectation.

Whether discussing luxury hotels, cruise ships or destination wellness resorts, speakers pointed to growing demand for contrast therapy, infrared saunas, cold plunges, IV therapy and recovery experiences that mirror what guests have incorporated into their everyday routines.

“Today’s cruise guests expect the same performance-based wellness experiences they enjoy at home,” said Tim Dux, executive vice president at OneSpaWorld.

▲ **OneSpaWorld has taken high-end wellness to the high seas.**

Sleep also emerged as one of hospitality’s fastest-growing wellness priorities. At Equinox Hotels, the brand has built much of its guest experience around optimizing sleep through thoughtfully designed rooms and recovery-focused amenities. “The three pillars of hospitality wellness to us are sleep, recovery and personalization,” said executive vice president of sales and marketing Andrea Caperonis.

Perhaps the biggest takeaway for fitness operators, however, was the industry’s growing focus on social wellness.

Across both discussions, panelists described wellness as an increasingly shared experience, with guests seeking opportunities to recover, train and connect together rather than alone. Jennifer Hotzworth, senior corporate director of Spa Operations at Montage International, predicted that social wellness will continue gaining momentum as consumers seek more opportunities for connection through retreats, group recovery experiences and thoughtfully designed communal spaces.

“People are yearning to be back in connection, so creating those spaces will be critical,” Hotzworth said. ■

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THE RECOVERY MENU THAT PAYS FOR ITSELF

Why the smartest gyms are building recovery programs that drive revenue, increase retention and earn every square foot they occupy



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RECOVERY IS PROVING to be one of the biggest growth opportunities in fitness as consumers have become proactive about their health, longevity and overall well-being.

They want to recover better from exercise, but they also want better sleep, more energy, lower stress, improved mobility, and the ability to stay active as they age. They value the confidence that they're investing in their long-term health, not just today's workout.

For gym operators, that demand is powerful—and potentially profitable. Recovery is no longer just for elite athletes. It has become part of a broader longevity strategy that influences where members choose to spend their health dollars.

Robin Kuehne has spent nearly 20 years watching that evolution firsthand. Before founding recovery equipment manufacturer NEO Science, he helped build CryoHealthcare alongside his brother, Jonas Kuehne, MD, and Jonas' wife, Emilia Kuehne. Today, CryoHealthcare continues to operate as one of Los Angeles's leading recovery clinics.

"One of the biggest lessons I've learned over the past 18 years is that consumers rarely come in asking for a modality," Kuehne said. "They come in looking for a better life."

He said once operators understand they are not selling modalities but outcomes, they begin to see recovery as another recurring revenue business within their facility.

People don't buy cryotherapy or red light therapy. They buy the improved physical, mental and emotional health benefits they provide. The technology is simply the vehicle that delivers those outcomes.

"The science matters, but those are the mechanisms," Kuehne said. "People buy the outcome."

THE DEMAND ALREADY EXISTS

For years, gyms owned the workout while healthcare, wellness and longevity happened somewhere else.

Members trained at the club, booked a massage across town, visited a chiropractor when something hurt and stopped by a recovery studio when they had pushed too hard during their last workout.

What they want is convenience. Kuehne knows because that's exactly what happened in his own business. What started as a cryotherapy clinic expanded organically from customer requests.

"We started as a cryotherapy clinic, but our customers kept asking, 'What else do you have?'" he said.

As consumers search for a one-stop solution, fitness facilities immediately emerge as the best answer. Members already trust their gym with one of the most important parts of their lives — their health — so they are uniquely positioned to become members' trusted health hub. They already visit several times a week. They already have a relationship with the staff. Building recovery into that experience saves time and makes sense. And Kuehne said if you don't act on that opportunity, your competitors will and your members will follow.

"If recovery, red light therapy, compression, hyperbaric oxygen, cryotherapy and other wellness and longevity services aren't available under your roof, many of them will simply go somewhere else to get them," he said.



If recovery, red light therapy, compression, hyperbaric oxygen, cryotherapy and other wellness and longevity services aren't available under your roof, many of them will simply go somewhere else to get them.”—Robin Kuehne, Neo Science



RECOVERY MAKES BUSINESS SENSE

Recovery isn't just good for members. It checks nearly every box operators care about. Done well, wellness and longevity services increase revenue per square foot, strengthens retention and creates recurring revenue without significantly increasing labor.

In order to realize these benefits Kuehne says the business model must focus on outcomes rather than modalities and build recovery into the member journey.

“A recovery program built around a member's goals becomes a relationship,” he said.

That's why he's a believer in memberships instead of session packages.

People don't build better sleep, healthier habits or faster recovery through occasional visits. Healthy aging and healthspan come from consistency. The operators seeing the strongest returns are the ones making recovery part of members' weekly routines instead of treating it like an occasional luxury.

“The businesses I've seen perform best don't sell ten sessions,” Kuehne said.

“They create habits. And habits create retention.”

BOOSTING PROFITS STARTS WITH EDUCATION

When it comes to determining which recovery equipment is best, Kuehne says don't get caught up on temperature ranges or technical specifications. Instead, he says, focus on utilization. Ask yourself: Will members actually use it?

“As I often tell operators, utilization beats specifications every single time,” he said, adding the best equipment is the equipment members actually use consistently.

And utilization starts with education. A recovery service with a small footprint, short appointment times and minimal staffing needs can become one

of the highest-producing areas in a facility -but only if members understand why it belongs in their routines.

“I've seen operators place an excellent modality in the corner of a facility and wonder why it never generated meaningful revenue,” Kuehne said.

He says the machine wasn't the problem. Recovery has to be introduced with simple language that explains how services fit each member's personal health goals and framed as an avenue for relieving stress or improving sleep, for example.

What operators need is a team that understands the equipment and the benefits.

“The equipment isn't labor-intensive,” Kuehne said. “It's knowledge-intensive.”

Front desk employees often have the biggest influence on participation because they're having conversations with members every day. When they understand the services, use them themselves and can connect them to individual goals, recovery stops feeling like an upsell and starts feeling like part of the membership.

Beyond that, wellness and longevity equipment is surprisingly easy to implement with little human capital overhead. The fact is most recovery technologies don't require dedicated employees attending to them all day. Modern systems are designed to fit easily into existing operations.

BUILT BY AN OPERATOR FOR OPERATORS

Having experienced downtime, training challenges and service frustrations firsthand, Kuehne says NEO Science was designed to solve operator problems, not simply introduce another modality. It allows him to build equipment around the realities of running a business. That means modular components that swap out in minutes instead of days, service built to keep equipment



earning rather than sitting idle and performance measured by what members actually feel – not a number on a spec sheet.

The company's NEO Light light therapy bed, BOA Max 2 touchless lymphatic detox and sports massage and the NEO Luna cryotherapy chambers are among a slate of recovery equipment that's focused on results for both operators and consumers.

“I built the support system I wished I'd had as an operator,” Kuehne said.

That operator-first mindset has also produced measurable business results. Kuehne reports that one Indiana fitness operator logged more than 4,600 sessions across two NEO Light beds in a year, with nearly all visits coming through recurring memberships. Another clinic generated roughly \$9,000 in presales before its equipment even arrived, simply polling existing members to confirm the service was something they wanted.

For Kuehne, those numbers reinforce what he's believed for years. Wellness and longevity are an entry point for gyms into a larger opportunity to help their members live healthier, and remain active as they age. And when a business helps people with that, members start thinking about the gym as an essential part of their lives.

“I don't believe the future belongs to the businesses with the most equipment,” Kuehne said. “It will belong to the ones that consistently improve their members' lives.” ●

THE FITNESS INDUSTRY EMBRACES ITS GLP-1 OPPORTUNITY

Industry leaders see GLP-1s as a catalyst for growth, but questions remain over whether the medications will ultimately drive more people into gyms **by Ani Freedman**



THE FITNESS INDUSTRY is conforming to a new type of consumer, as the number of people taking GLP-1 medications increases and the public perception of weight-loss, health and exercise shifts. ✨ While 1 in 8 adults reports currently taking a GLP-1 medication, nearly 1 in 5 say they've taken the medication at some point, indicating widespread interest beyond those who are already on drugs like Ozempic and Wegovy. That shift has opened up key opportunities for fitness brands to play new roles in weight-loss: encouraging more active lifestyles to sustain weight-loss, namely strength training to prevent muscle loss, as well as embracing the growing gym-as-a-clinic movement.

Influential industry voices have already been exploring how to capitalize on that GLP-1-fueled momentum.

Top fitness trade organizations from the U.S., U.K., Australia, New Zealand and Canada recently published a white paper supporting the health benefits of exercise — especially strength training — for GLP-1 users, underscoring their previous sentiments in a statement earlier this year calling on governments, health systems and international institutions to encourage GLP-1 treatment plans are supported by lifestyle interventions like exercise and nutrition.

“The health and fitness industry has long known that lasting wellness requires more than a number on a scale; it requires strength, function and sustainable healthy life habits,” said Health & Fitness Association president and interim CEO Greta Wagner. “This research confirms that exercise, especially strength training, helps patients sustain the benefits of GLP-1 treatment over time. It sends a clear message that exercise belongs at the center of GLP-1 care.”

HOW OPERATORS ARE EMBRACING GLP-1S

The relationship between GLP-1s and the fitness industry is two-fold: on one hand, weight-loss has always been an inherent part of fitness, making it a natural progression for operators to fold the medications into their businesses.

On the other, research indicates that a substantial portion of body mass lost is lean muscle mass, opening the door for operators to offer greater support to GLP-1 users and double down on the importance of strength training.

Tapping into a population that's expected to reach 30 million U.S. users by 2030, 17 gym and fitness club operators now have some form of a GLP-1 program, according to a report from Inspire360 from earlier this year.

Those approaches range from adapted programming, which involves structuring workouts and coaching



for GLP-1 users, to in-house clinics where physicians or nurse practitioners prescribe GLP-1s directly at clubs, to referral loops in which gyms refer members to clinics, and clinics refer patients to fitness clubs for support.

Luxury operators like Life Time are following the trend of the gym-as-a-clinic model, taking GLP-1s into their own hands by offering members prescriptions in the same place they work out.

But most other brands are opting for partnerships with telehealth companies that offer GLP-1 prescriptions.

For instance, Planet Fitness has partnered with GLP-1 provider Ro to operate as a referral-only model where members receive a referral/discount from the fitness chain, as CEO Colleen Keating pointed to the growing opportunity the medications provide. Survey findings commissioned by one of its franchisees found that roughly half of people who take a GLP-1 medication consider a gym membership, with its users likely to continue multiplying as GLP-1s become more accessible

“Lasting wellness requires more than a number on a scale; it requires strength, function and sustainable healthy life habits. This research confirms that exercise, especially strength training, helps patients sustain the benefits of GLP-1 treatment over time. It sends a clear message that exercise belongs at the center of GLP-1 care.”

—Greta Wagner, Health & Fitness Association





“Healthcare is heavily dependent on fitness being an integrated part in this therapy. ... GLP-1s are not fighting the fitness industry. GLP-1s are helping support the fitness industry.” —Kiersten Fitzgerald, Thrive

through lower pricing and pill formats.

“We see positive indicators for continued growth and demand for our offering as GLP-1s become more accessible,” Keating told investors during Planet’s Q4 earnings call in February.

Fellow high-value low-price (HVLP) operator Crunch Fitness also announced its partnership with Thrive in its own referral program for the weight-loss drugs, while New York Sports Club partnered with telehealth platform Thrive to give members access to its personalized plans, which include weight-loss treatment and GLP-1s.

Meanwhile, boutique brand F45 Training offers a bundle program through telehealth platform Dr. B that consists of a co-branded GLP-1 and fitness/nutrition program, giving both partners a revenue share. F45 also has a partnership with telehealth platform Joi + Blokes that includes access to GLP-1s.

UFC Gym has also fully leaned into its wellness and longevity offerings, unveiling in-club clinics through a partnership with NexGen MD Scientific to provide members access to GLP-1s.

“When you take a GLP-1 or other therapies, it’s not just about exercise or the prescription; it’s about nutrition, community,” said Thrive COO Kiersten Fitzgerald at the 2026 ATN Innovation Summit. She thinks that the weight-loss drugs are going to cause a long-term shift for the industry — and brands will be quick to fall behind if they don’t adapt to this new crop of members.

“Healthcare is heavily dependent on fitness being an integrated part in this therapy,” Fitzgerald explained.

“GLP-1s are not fighting the fitness industry,” she added. “GLP-1s are helping support the fitness industry.”

It’s not just physical clubs and gyms that are streamlining access to GLP-1s, either — Daxko recently launched its Elevate Wellness program, meant to help gyms and clubs provide GLP-1 support and other telehealth offerings through physician-guided metabolic health services. The program provides support for not only GLP-1 weight management, but also hormone therapy and peptides through licensed telemedicine partners.



BUT ARE GLP-1S ACTUALLY GOOD FOR THE INDUSTRY?

Although GLP-1s are opening up new opportunities left and right for the fitness industry, the reality of how they’re influencing consumer behavior is a bit more complicated.

A recent survey of 300 GLP-1 users from investment banking firm William Blair Equity Research shows an optimistic outlook, finding a three-percentage point increase in gym memberships (up to 35% from 33%) after starting the medication, versus the two-percentage point uptick to 24% seen during the 2024 survey. Users are overall exercising more as well — 72% responded they were working out more often, compared to 60% in the 2024 survey.

Driving the trend are mostly Gen Z and Millennials, with reported fitness club memberships among those under 45 jumping to 62% after beginning treatment, versus 43% from 2024. The largest increase was seen with 18-to-24-year-olds, for whom memberships more than doubled to nearly 62%.

A big reason people are working out more while undergoing treatment is the mental and physical boost the drugs can offer. Participants cited feeling more motivated, higher energy levels and greater mobility that’s encouraging them to exercise more often.

Moreover, some consumers are spending more on fitness as a result of going on GLP-1s, a recent PwC survey of over 2,300 U.K. adults found.

Upon starting GLP-1 treatment, over a quarter of users (27%) reported spending more on fitness, while 5% said they

decreased how much they were spending (a 22% net increase in fitness spending).

People are feeling empowered to move more after seeing progress from treatment, the report asserts, leaving them more likely to begin exercising or enter fitness spaces they may have previously felt uncomfortable in.

But it appears GLP-1s could actually be having the opposite effect on many users, other research has indicated.

Data from the National Institutes of Health’s All of Us Research Program, which links participants’ electronic health records with their Fitbit

“There will be some people who spend less on health and fitness, but I think there’s more opportunities. ... Gyms can be intimidating places, and this will really make more people feel confident enough to go.” Eleanor Scott, Partner Strategy& (PwC)



activity data, revealed that overall movement decreased after starting GLP-1 treatment, with no evidence that weight loss from the medications led to increased physical activity.

“While many assume that weight loss leads naturally to increased physical activity, our study suggests otherwise,” lead author Dr. Sajana Maharjan said.

“The findings in our study reinforce that exercise cannot be optional for people taking these medications. People need targeted interventions that encourage physical activity alongside medication for obesity.”

Still, for fitness stakeholders, there’s good reason to be optimistic about the future.

“There will be some people who spend less on health and fitness, but I think there’s more opportunities. I think it will support growth if the sector can develop to kind of support people on that journey,” said Eleanor Scott, a partner at PwC’s Strategy&. “Gyms can be intimidating places, and this will really make more people feel confident enough to go. So genuinely, I think it’s overall net positive.” ■

RECOVERY ISN'T AN AMENITY IT'S A REVENUE STRATEGY

Members expect more than a workout. They expect recovery, longevity, and wellness experiences that keep them coming back.



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HOW OPERATORS ARE TURNING WELLNESS SPACES INTO BUSINESS ASSETS

The next phase of recovery is less about adding equipment and more about creating experiences that deliver value for members and measurable returns for operators.



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RECOVERY is no longer the differentiator it once was.

Red light therapy, massage, compression, cold therapy and other wellness modalities have become common across the fitness industry. Yet as more facilities invest in recovery spaces, a new question has emerged: why are some operators generating meaningful value from these offerings while others are simply filling square footage?

The answer often comes down to strategy.

Operators have moved beyond deciding whether to offer recovery. The focus now is on how to implement recovery in a way that drives utilization, creates revenue and supports long-term member engagement.

"The conversation has evolved significantly, even within the last year," says Andy Dunn, Executive Director Sales for Wellssystem. "No longer do we talk about just having the amenity. Now it's about operationalizing it, monetizing it and bringing it to life in a facility."

That shift is changing how operators think about everything from programming and staffing to pricing and space allocation. Recovery is becoming part of the overall member journey, but it is also becoming part of the business model.

BUILDING RECOVERY INTO THE BUSINESS

For many facilities, the first phase of recovery was straightforward: add a modality and gauge interest.

Today, operators are focused less on the modality itself and more on how it is delivered. Recovery can be integrated into memberships, personal training programs, wellness packages and standalone services, giving facilities multiple ways to create value for both members and the business.

"Recovery amenities create opportunities to generate revenue while simultaneously enhancing the member experience," says Dunn. "Facilities can offer premium memberships, wellness upgrades, session packages or pay-per-use services."



Recovery amenities create opportunities to generate revenue while simultaneously enhancing the member experience.”

—Andy Dunn, Wellsystem



That flexibility has become particularly valuable as operators look for ways to diversify revenue beyond monthly dues.

Recovery spaces also create opportunities to serve a broader audience. Consumers seeking massage, red light therapy or other wellness experiences may engage with a facility differently than traditional fitness members, creating additional touchpoints and new pathways into the business.

RETHINKING THE DELIVERY MODEL

While member demand has helped fuel recovery's growth, operational realities are shaping many purchasing decisions.

Staffing remains one of the biggest challenges facing fitness and wellness businesses. Every new service creates questions around labor, scheduling, training and ongoing management.

That's one reason self-service modalities are gaining traction.

“Self-service wellness modalities offer the best of both worlds,” explains Dunn. “Members can access premium recovery experiences on their own time and operators can provide the services without additional staffing.”

Wellsystem's HydroWave and RedWave were designed with that operational model in mind.

HydroWave delivers a touchless hydro-massage experience that allows members to incorporate recovery into their schedules without requiring a therapist or dedicated staff member. RedWave combines red light and infrared light therapy in a self-guided format that can be integrated before workouts, after training sessions or as part of a broader wellness routine.

The self-service approach also supports flexibility for members.

“Use it before a workout, after a workout, on a light training day, a recovery day or on your lunch break,” Dunn notes. “That versatility makes these products

such fantastic all-rounders.”

For operators, the result is a premium wellness experience that can be delivered efficiently while maintaining accessibility and convenience for members.

TURNING RECOVERY INTO REVENUE

The next step is monetization.

As operators become more strategic about recovery spaces, many are looking for models that allow them to generate revenue without creating friction for members.

Wellsystem's integrated payment technology was developed to support that goal.

“The addition of integrated payment technology gives operators a flexible and low-barrier way to monetize wellness and recovery services,” Dunn says.

Rather than requiring a member to commit to a premium membership or package upfront, facilities can offer pay-per-use access, allowing consumers to experience recovery modalities on their own terms.

The approach creates flexibility for both operators and members. It can function as a standalone revenue stream, a premium upgrade opportunity or an introduction to broader wellness services.

The model is also creating opportunities outside of traditional fitness environments.

“We're seeing particular interest from the hospitality and spa sectors, where underutilized spaces such as former business centers, unused treatment rooms or vacant wellness areas can be transformed into revenue-generating recovery spaces,” Dunn says.

For many operators, that represents a different way of thinking about wellness amenities. Rather than viewing recovery as a cost center, they're evaluating how those spaces contribute to overall business performance.

DRIVING ADOPTION

The operators seeing the strongest results are doing more than offering recovery services. They are integrating them into programming and coaching.

Dunn says education and prescription have emerged as two of the most effective tools for driving adoption.

“We are finding that members and end users are sometimes more educated than the operator,” he says. “They are seeking out places that have these modalities.”

Once those consumers arrive, trainers, coaches and wellness professionals have an opportunity to provide guidance around protocols, timing and usage.

Prescription plays an equally important role.

“Where we see the most success is when these services are prescribed, just like your strength program,” Dunn says.

The company points to GLP-1 users as one example. Strength training is often recommended to help preserve muscle mass during weight loss. Recovery modalities can then be integrated to support that training process.

“The example that I always give is the personal trainer that prescribes massage and red-light to their client who is taking a GLP-1,” he says. “HydroWave to start lymphatic drainage, followed by a RedWave red-light session to help cellular turnover and joint recovery.”

The goal is not simply to add another wellness service. It's to create a more complete experience that supports member outcomes while strengthening engagement.

In the end, Dunn says the facilities generating the strongest returns aren't necessarily those with the most recovery equipment. “They're the facilities treating recovery as an integrated part of both the member journey and the business strategy behind it.” ●

WELLNESS REAL ESTATE IS BOOMING



IT'S ALSO EVOLVING

As real estate developers increasingly prioritize adding fitness and wellness options to woo tenants, they're also thinking more broadly about what it means to build spaces that foster well-being.

by Josh Liberatore

▲
The luxury
fitness center
at Related Ross'
Shorecrest in
West Palm Beach.

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS are going all in on wellness as a way to attract tenants to high-end mixed-use developments. ✨ That was the key takeaway from Jordan Bargas’ appearance at the ATN Innovation Summit, where the executive vice president at Related Ross, the South Florida-focused arm of real estate giant Related Companies, sat down for a one-on-one conversation with *Athletech News* founder and CEO Edward Hertzman. ✨ “Historically ... it was almost like a check-the-box,” Bargas said of how real estate developers used to view fitness and wellness. “You put some amenities in your building, and that was that.” ✨ Now, he says, wellness real estate is “so much more than that,” becoming more centered on “what goes beyond the four walls” of physical buildings. Today, developers are aiming to create immersive environments for community and connection, with fitness and wellness serving as core pillars.

‘LIVE, WORK, PLAY & RECOVER’

Bargas said Related Companies’ massive Hudson Yards project in New York City has shown that people have an appetite for all-in-one developments that combine office buildings, apartments and recreational spaces like gyms.

“What we learned most was that ‘live, work, play’ environment was what people wanted, and I think it created a happier, healthier, more connected life, particularly for the office workers that were there every day,” he said.

But wellness is changing, and so is what people want from where they live, work and play.

“‘Live, work, play’ was all the rage five years ago,” Bargas noted. “Now, I think it’s ‘live, work, play and recover,’ because there’s such a focus (today) on recovery and on health.”

He noted that Gen Z is spending more on wellness than any generation before, even amid economic concerns.

“No one would have thought that 5-10 years ago, so I think as we look into the future, I think more and more effort, more and more resources, (are) going to be put into the health, recovery, and wellness space, because that’s what people want,” he said.

WHAT GOES INTO A WELLNESS REAL ESTATE PROJECT

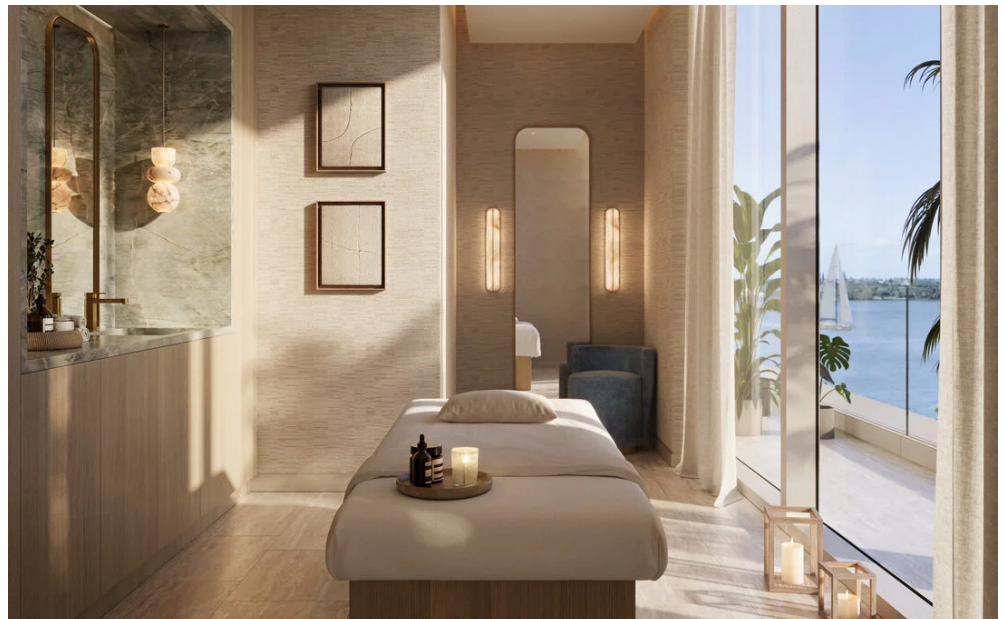
When it comes to designing attractive wellness real estate spaces, Bargas said developers need to think beyond just standard fitness equipment and recovery amenities.

“It’s got to be way more than that. ... anybody can put a sauna and a cold punch in a building and call it wellness,” he said.

At its developments in South Florida, Related Ross partners with fitness and wellness brands to stage activations, including things like outdoor yoga classes. They’ve also staged live music and other outdoor events to encourage social connection.

“Those are the types of community events that create an atmosphere where

▼ A spa treatment room at Shorecrest Residences in West Palm Beach.



people are starting to think of South Florida as a wellness destination,” he said.

“You’re not really just talking about the building; you’re talking about the entire neighborhood; the entire community,” he added.

OPPORTUNITY FOR FITNESS BRANDS

As developers continue to prioritize wellness, gyms and fitness studios are becoming more attractive tenants, Bargas noted. He hinted that some landlords might even be willing to cut a deal to attract fitness operators as tenants.

“If that tenant is paying a little less, but is the right thing and amenity for the residents or the office workers above, and you get an extra dollar or two from everybody else above, it’s well worth it,” he said. “It pays for itself.”

Bargas also reiterated that he expects fitness and wellness to play a key role in commercial and residential real estate projects in the years ahead.

“Health and wellness is a big chunk of that pie, more so than it was five years ago,” he said. ■

“**‘Live, work, play’ was all the rage five years ago. Now, I think it’s ‘live, work, play and recover.’**”

— Jordan Bargas, Related Ross



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CLINIC OR ALGORITHMS? WHY PREVENTIVE FITNESS' WINNERS WILL CHOOSE NEITHER

Welltech pioneer InsideTracker explains the new third model allowing fitness operators to deliver biology-based, hyper-personalized healthspan guidance at scale



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TODAY'S CONSUMERS ARE

hungry to know what's happening inside their bodies. They track sleep scores, monitor their heart rates and track their glucose levels, all in an effort to get – and stay – healthier.

What's notable: they're looking for these insights outside the traditional healthcare system, which is built on managing existing conditions. For fitness brands, this shift has created a new opportunity to become the front door to preventive health.

"People have grown far more proactive about their health, and traditional healthcare isn't built to meet them there," says Rony Sellam, Chief Executive Officer at welltech pioneer InsideTracker. "Gyms, studios, and other fitness destinations are a natural fit for that movement. They're evolving from a place to work out to a place to optimize your health."

But first operators at those fitness destinations must figure out how to deliver what wellness-focused consumers are now demanding: not just workouts, but tailored, actionable, and credible health guidance.

TWO PATHS MOST OPERATORS CONSIDER

Until now, most fitness brands have had just two viable strategies to expand beyond exercise into personalized longevity, nutrition and recovery solutions.

The first is adding more familiar faces: building out teams of coaches, clinicians, or other human experts consumers already trust to deliver tailored one-to-one care. The second is to embrace one of the growing number of AI-powered, one-to-many coaching platforms. Both approaches offer advantages, but each has limitations that are hard to ignore.

Perhaps the biggest: neither is fully aware of what's happening inside members' bodies or how to react to it. For gyms and studios to make the transition to trusted longevity partners, that deeper biological knowledge is key.

"We believe two key goals will push winning brands into that upper tier: finding a way to democratize access to personalized, evidence-based healthspan guidance, and treating biology as the organizing foundation of their personalization strategy instead of one input among many," Sellam says.

TRADEOFFS EITHER WAY

Between teams of bandwidth-limited experts and AI-driven coaching platforms, many operators are finding that neither model enables them to provide tailored, rigorous health guidance across their membership base.

Human experts can deliver something technology still struggles to replicate: judgment. A physician, dietitian or coach can recognize subtle warning signs through interactions that build trust. But that headcount is difficult to scale. Every new team member has to be recruited, onboarded, and managed.

AI offers efficiency. LLMs can track and analyze strength, mobility, balance, body composition and cardiovascular performance, then automatically adjust programming as members improve. The technology scales, creating a highly personalized experience without adding staff or operational overhead.

The challenge: most AI systems don't yet dig deep enough. They know how much weight someone lifted, their recovery time between sets, and whether balance, mobility or HRV improved from week to week. What they don't know is why.

That's an increasingly important distinction as consumers begin expecting fitness brands to provide deeply personalized, actionable health guidance, not simply better workouts.



Whether they're being guided by a human coach or an AI coach, members should be able to see that guidance is grounded in best-of-breed science, not asked to take it on faith from a confident source."—Rony Sellam, InsideTracker



"Having a credentialed pro in the room has big benefits for each individual, but that can only be in so many rooms with so many members. Meanwhile, AI can't personalize on data it can't access, so its flexibility only goes so far," Sellam says. "Fitness brands need a solution that gives them the best of both: trusted, clinical-grade guidance, delivered at AI scale."

THE MISSING LAYER

For years, personalization in fitness has centered on observable behavior and readily trackable data. As many fitness brands are discovering, two members can follow identical training programs and achieve completely different outcomes because of differences in things like their metabolic health or recovery capacity. Without understanding those underlying biological factors, personalization—in person or virtual—is inevitably limited and superficial.

To address the gaps in both models, operators need both biology-level data and systems that can interpret it at scale—something neither clinical teams nor off-the-shelf AI platforms can provide.

"Coaches will always be a vital touchpoint for fitness brands, but relying on human expertise creates an inevitable bottleneck," says Sellam. "AI makes recommendations easy to generate in volume, but the quality of those outputs is totally dependent on the data and domain expertise underneath them, so leaning into AI before solving for expertise and data foundation is simply a recipe for automating generic advice at scale."

Today, many fitness brands are still caught between these two models—and both are falling short of delivering the preventative health guidance consumers are demanding.



TRUST IS KEY

The more AI-generated wellness advice consumers encounter, and thinner coaching teams are stretched, the more portable expertise will become a competitive advantage for brands aiming to scale personalized experiences without compromising accuracy. To avoid bottlenecking growth with human trust backstops, brands need technology-enabled personalization solutions that deliver credibility by design.

"Fluency doesn't earn trust, transparency does," Sellam says. "Whether they're being guided by a human coach or an AI coach, members should be able to see that guidance is grounded in best-of-breed science, not asked to take it on faith from a confident source."

For operators, that means choosing technology that explains where recommendations come from and what evidence supports them. The more transparent the guidance, the more confidence members will have in acting on it.

For brands assessing the accuracy and credibility of different technological solutions, Sellam recommends vetting potential partners on how they embed scientific rigor in the personalized guidance they generate for users. In the meantime, he also suggests capturing as much member demographic, behavioral and biological data as possible upfront.

"The value of any future model will be dramatically increased by the right intelligence partner, their datasets, and their trust strategy. But it also depends on the history

you've built by the time you switch on your selected personalization solution," he says. "The more you know about your members, the more you and your partner can pinpoint their exact needs, behaviorally and biologically."

A NEW THIRD OPTION

To meet consumer expectations, and scale both personalization and credibility, fitness operators no longer have to choose between building expensive coaching teams or relying on AI systems trained primarily on behavioral, lifestyle, or movement data. A new category of technology is emerging that combines scalable AI with biology-based personalization grounded in scientific evidence.

Rather than relying on AI to make educated guesses, InsideTracker's Terra™ platform begins with biologic, physiologic and genetic data used to create individualized guidance across activity, nutrition, recovery, supplementation and lifestyle.

Designed as a modular intelligence layer for health and fitness organizations, Terra combines explainable, rules-based AI with guidance backed by more than 7,000 clinical studies. The platform transforms biological data into highly personalized recommendations while maintaining the transparency operators need to earn member trust.

With Terra, fitness brands can achieve all of this without choosing between clinicians and algorithms. The scientific rigor, biological intelligence and human expertise provide a member experience that is both personal and infinitely scalable.

"Today, members aren't really paying for coaches, labs or data tracking," Sellam says. "They're paying to know what their body is telling them about their health and the tailored health strategies they can follow to optimize it. That's exactly what we're enabling at scale." ●

THE RACE TO MAKE DOG YEARS LONGER

Breakthroughs in canine aging science are bridging the gap between human and pet longevity, inspiring new products from smart collars to microbiome-based supplements.
by Ani Freedman



LONGEVITY SCIENCE is now bridging the gap between human and animal, and there's a burgeoning market for dog wellness as more brands create products made to support healthy aging amongst beloved pets. ✨ At the forefront of that space is the Dog Aging Project, led by longevity tech company Optispan co-founder and CEO Matt Kaeberlein. ✨ Kaeberlein's team is humanely studying dogs through the clinical trial, and how their aging can be applied to research on aging in people, all while finding solutions to extending the lives of dogs. Over 52,000 dogs are enrolled in the trial, as owners track their pet's weight, age, diet and more.

"At its core, it's about taking rigorous science and applying it in a way that meaningfully improves the lives of both dogs and the people who care about them," Kaeberlein told Athletech News.

Longevity insights can crossover, too. The science being applied to human aging could help provide what any dog-owner longs for: more time with their pet.

"We already knew that certain interventions, like rapamycin, could slow aging and extend lifespan and healthspan in laboratory animals," Kaeberlein explained. "And because the biology of aging is so highly conserved, there was every reason to believe that some of those same interventions would work in dogs."

THE DOG LONGEVITY MARKET GROWS

The progress in understanding how dogs age is already being met with products and interventions toward canine lifespan and healthspan.

One of the leaders in that sector is Fi, a pet-tech company that makes a smart dog collar and companion app for GPS location tracking, activity monitoring, sleep and behavior insights and escape alerts. And now, the company has launched Fi Intelligence, an AI-powered health companion built into its app.

The machine learning software draws upon the dog's individual data to highlight meaningful patterns and flag anomalies, as well as being trained on Fi's proprietary dataset to contextualize insights, showing how a dog compares to others of the same breed, age and size.

Users can also turn to Fi's AI tool to answer questions about if their dog is getting enough exercise, sleeping properly or if any behaviors are indicators of larger problems.

"Our collars have been quietly building one of the most comprehensive canine health datasets in the world," said Fi CEO and co-founder Jonathan Bensamoun. "Now we're giving that information back to our members as the ultimate health insight tool for their dogs."

The AI-powered insights offer additional support for vet visits, as owners are equipped with a better



baseline knowledge of what's going on with their dogs and know what questions to ask.

PureStrong is a new probiotic developed exclusively for a dog's gut health, from health and bioscience company IFF, which is capitalizing on the \$3.2 billion U.S. pet supplement market.

"PureStrong is sourced directly from the microbiome of healthy canines and designed to support how dogs actually live — how they eat, travel, age and adapt to change," said senior vice president of health sciences for IFF, Allyson Fish. The product comes in powders, capsules, tablets and sticks.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR CANINE WELLNESS

Kaeberlein's project has already uncovered meaningful information into how dogs age, especially about brain health, oral health and exercise, which he envisions will shift how dogs are cared for in the coming years — and the market that will continue growing from that.

The data that Kaeberlein is uncovering through the trial is figures to dictate how the market develops. For starters, he sees a huge opportunity for better biomarker testing and screening approaches to predict or detect disease

“At its core, it's about taking rigorous science and applying it in a way that meaningfully improves the lives of both dogs and the people who care about them.” — Matt Kaeberlein, Optispan



risk earlier and more accurately.

"Veterinary medicine still lags far behind human medicine here," he noted.

Secondly, he predicts we'll likely see more drugs for dogs that target aging to delay or prevent multiple age-related conditions by slowing biological aging.

"There's a mix of high-quality, evidence-based approaches and many products that lack strong supporting data — especially in the supplement space," Kaeberlein pointed out. "The key is helping consumers differentiate between the two. Veterinarians will play an important role here, and owners should be cautious about marketing claims that outpace the science."

That being said, he is excited to see the field moving in the right direction, and product innovations will only improve as the research does.

"I'm very confident that we will develop interventions that improve both lifespan and quality of life for dogs, and that will have important implications for human aging as well," Kaeberlein said. ■



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WHY CONVENIENCE IS FROST LOCKER'S KEY DIFFERENTIATOR

The Am-Finn wellness brand knows that if it wants people to invest in wellness, it has to make it easy for them to develop a regular habit.

T

THERE ARE ALREADY enough barriers standing between people and a wellness routine featuring impactful contrast therapy. Finding the time is hard enough. Several cold therapy concepts demand a premium price or require specialized clothing.

Frost Locker, the Am-Finn wellness technology brand, is careful not to add additional obstacles. Its temperature-controlled rooms, chilled between 30-36 degrees Fahrenheit, deliver the benefits of cold therapy in 5-10 minute sessions without the challenges, expense or discomfort that plunges or cryo chambers require.

“For a long time, recovery was something you had to earn access to – a training room at a pro facility, a spa membership or a specialist appointment,” said Chris Bantrup, Business Development Manager at Am-Finn. “But the science behind things like cold and heat therapy isn’t exclusive to elite athletes, and people have caught onto that. Gyms, apartment buildings and even fire stations are asking for recovery spaces now because their members and residents want the same benefits without needing an elite budget or schedule.”

With an established presence in many of those environments, Frost Locker has already started building wellness around convenience. The brand expects more organizations to do the same in the future as well.



ACCESSIBILITY IS A REQUIREMENT

The more hurdles a wellness routine presents, the harder it is to perform consistently. Even the most dedicated wellness enthusiasts will eventually get tripped up, Bantrup argues.

“If a recovery tool takes as much planning as a doctor’s appointment, most people just won’t use it

consistently, no matter how good it is for them,” he said. “That’s the piece the industry missed for a while – treating recovery like a ‘someday’ investment instead of something as regular as a workout. Convenience isn’t a nice-to-have anymore; it’s what actually determines whether someone uses a product once or makes it a consistent part of their contrast therapy routine.”



Convenience isn't a nice-to-have anymore; it's what actually determines whether someone uses a product once or makes it a consistent part of their contrast therapy routine."—Chris Bantrup, Am-Finn



Frost Locker delivers on that front with a cold temperature experience that eliminates the need for ice, water treatment, towels, a change of clothes and cleaning between uses. You walk into the chamber as you would any other room. It's that simple.

"It's a fully customizable room," Bantrup added. "Think of it as a cold sauna. There's no queue, no shared water and no waiting for someone else's session to end and the water to be topped off."

Frost Locker established this low entry barrier intentionally and with everyday individuals in mind, to ensure inexperienced wellness consumers have no reason to feel intimidated.

"The fringe 20% who already love ice baths and cryo chambers were always going to find a way to use recovery tools no matter how inconvenient they were, but the other 80% who are curious about recovery and want the benefits will only participate if it's genuinely easy," Bantrup said. "So, we designed around that larger group rather than the enthusiasts."

LOW MAINTENANCE BY DESIGN

Aside from the benefits of having more engaged, satisfied members, operators with Frost Lockers also get an added layer of flexibility when it comes to dispersing manpower. Since there's no ice to manage, water chemistry to test or need to drain or fill a tub, there's no additional demands on the team to support the service. The Frost Locker holds a precise temperature on its own.

"It works the same way a walk-in cooler does," Bantrup said.

"The goal was that a facility could put this in the same category as any other piece of equipment on the floor — something that just works when someone walks up to it, rather than something that needs a protocol sheet and a staff member standing by."

BUILDING LASTING HABITS

As the wellness market continues to expand, Bantrup expects convenience to emerge as a differentiator between thriving and futile businesses in the future.

"I think accessible recovery is going to end up being one of the bigger levers in the whole longevity conversation," he said. "People don't fail at wellness because they don't understand the benefits — they fail because the good habits are inconvenient enough that life gets in the way."

A widespread commitment to convenience from the industry promises to benefit all, as consumers enjoy longer, healthier lives, while operators profit.

"When recovery is as easy to access as a treadmill or a locker room shower, it stops being something people have to plan around and starts being something they just do," Bantrup went on. "Lowering that barrier to entry is what turns a one-time trial into a habit, and habits are what actually move the needle on long-term health, not occasional use of a fancy tool." ●

WHAT IS A “LIVING LAB”?

During a four-day retreat, Spain-based Slow had attendees wear Whoop trackers, test their blood biomarkers and more to evaluate whether wellness getaways can produce measurable changes in well-being **by Ani Freedman**



PEOPLE EMBARK ON WELLNESS retreats in hopes of resetting, returning home with a greater sense of rejuvenation, calmness and the assurance they supported their overall health and well-being. ✨ But the promises of wellness retreats are one thing, and tangible results are another. That's why Spain-based company Slow crafted a four-day experiment in Mallorca to put to the test whether a wellness retreat can shift anything measurable. ✨ The 10-person longevity program, co-created with preventive medicine specialist Dr. Ángel Durántez, brought together a group of high performers — founders, executives and creatives — to operate as a “living lab.”



Across the board, attendees saw improvements, especially for certain metrics:

83%
said energy levels improved

83%
reported decreased body tension

67%
had improved sleep quality

67%
felt heightened mental clarity

50%
felt they were better equipped to “switch off” their minds

17%
reported lower stress and a heightened sense of calm

While the Slow retreat may not exemplify all wellness retreats out there, nor long-term impacts, the results do reflect an immediate impact on key markers of health, especially with how intertwined stress is with chronic inflammation that leads to serious illness.

The experiment arrives as wellness tourism and real estate are taking off. More brands are unveiling their own wellness-oriented upgrades and programs, like SHA Wellness or Marriott's latest investment in luxury wellness — creating a competitive market for the growing population looking to unplug and decompress.

Meanwhile, the wellness real estate market is exploding, too, projected to more than double to \$1.8 trillion by 2030. Developers are tapping into trends like an in-person connection and communal spaces like pickleball and padel courts, abandoning screens. ■

Over four days, attendees participated in various wellness activities and practices, including:

- 01**
Sunrise breathwork and meditation meant to align the circadian rhythm through natural light exposure
- 02**
Cold immersion and guided cryotherapy
- 03**
Movement sessions, hiking and restorative practices for physical regulation
- 04**
A Mediterranean anti-inflammatory diet

Throughout the retreat and in the week leading up to it, participants wore Whoop bands to compare their regular day-to-day metrics with those during their four days in Mallorca. The wearables tracked sleep duration and stages, recovery score, HRV, resting heart rate and strain.

On top of that, each participant received blood biomarker tests upon arrival and at the end of the retreat, with a focus on fasting glucose/HbA1c and cortisol.

As the retreat industry markets transformational experiences, Slow aimed to see how those outcomes actually measured up to such promises. Here's what they found.

For 80% of the attendees, cortisol levels dropped by an average of 8.4%. The organizers also tasked participants to self-report their baseline levels across a variety of measurements, including perceived stress and energy.

80%
of the attendees cortisol levels dropped by an average of 8.4%

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INSIDE FIT BRAND'S LATEST MILESTONE, BOUTIQUE PILATES BRAND FS8

As FIT House of Brands celebrates this milestone, the company highlights the principles that drive its roster of franchises.

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FS8, THE FIT HOUSE of Brands franchise that combines Pilates, yoga and tone, just opened its 100th studio. But while the brand is proud to have hit that mark, it's not chasing growth for growth's sake.

"The fitness industry has a short memory," said Tom Dowd, CEO of FIT House of Brands. "Trends come and go."

FS8 trusts its science-backed programming, designed to deliver measurable results in an inclusive experience, will continue to power its momentum, with consumers naturally gravitating to its community.

"Reaching 100 studios is a meaningful milestone and reflects the consumer's desire for unique, challenging workout experiences that exceed expectations, and FS8 delivers on all fronts," Dowd said. "We understand that people want an experience that challenges them physically, while also being sustainable for their bodies and minds and belonging to a supportive community."

MEETING A VARIETY OF NEEDS

FS8's programming leverages a variety of established industry verticals. That includes longevity, where its focus on functional fitness supports healthy aging, as well as modern medicine, where



strength training has become an essential complement. By doing so, the brand is pulling in consumers from all corners of the market.

"What's really telling is who's showing up," Dowd said. "We're seeing more men, athletes and beginners attending FS8 classes. We're also seeing many new members using GLP-1 drugs and peptides who are working to build muscle mass and improve their overall fitness with us."

Dowd added that FS8 and its other Pilates brand, VAURA Pilates, which just announced its 10th studio and first-ever Indonesia space, also offer restorative-specific classes that improve flexibility and mobility. Those resonate with HYROX competitors or marathon runners, which are two demographics that continue to grow. Dowd called HYROX "one of the most exciting competitions to happen in the fitness industry in years."



We understand that people want an experience that challenges them physically, while also being sustainable for their bodies and minds and belonging to a supportive community.” —Tom Dowd, FIT



Across FIT House brands, the company delivers on consumer demands, while also prioritizing education that highlights the essentials for their overall health. Dowd argues the commitment to betterment shared by his franchisees and trainers is second to none.

“Our trainers and franchisees have done a tremendous job educating members on how strength and recovery are equally critical to overall performance,” he said. “FS8 and Vaura Pilates are accessible and elevated due to our incredibly experienced instructors who genuinely care about each member’s personal commitment to their wellness. Our FIT House of Brands family has a superpower: our commitment to our members and our community, which is why the growth continues to build momentum.”

CROSS-POLLINATING ACROSS BRANDS

While it’s FS8 hitting this milestone, Dowd views it as a shared accomplishment among the FIT House brands. Alongside FS8, VAURA features an immersive reformer-style training, while F45 Training includes structured, high-intensity interval training (HIIT).

With this reciprocal programming, they all empower each other.

“Each brand has its own experience, and members move through all workouts as part of a single wellness journey,” Dowd said. “Our members train functionally, and have discovered that Pilates reformer and movement are necessities. We feel confident that this ‘cross-pollination’ validates the strong portfolio we built.”

FOSTERING COMMUNITY & CAMARADERIE

FIT House also attributes much of FS8’s growth to its commitment toward community. Dowd insists this takes intention and focus on even the little things.

“Community is created in the details,” Dowd said. “Our best-in-class coaches provide tips on form and check in on personal injuries, and know members’ names.”

FS8 specifically provides an open, light environment to help foster community. Opposite to what the Pilates category has historically offered, this approach welcomes members and brings warmth to the studio.

FIT House’s community also extends beyond the boundaries of a membership. The brand

maintains bring-a-guest programs and curates out-of-the-studio local events that expand camaraderie and brand interest. It also paves an organic path toward growth.

“I know that when we bring folks in to experience our workout and energy, we will win them over with our performance-driven products,” Dowd said.

FIT House keeps the community engaged through loyalty programs like FIT Rewards as well, which incentivizes consistent activity. Members can exchange earned points for apparel, supplements, food, beverages and tech within FIT online stores.

“Our HQ team continues to challenge themselves to create more value and variety for our members,” Dowd added.

100, 200, & BEYOND

Dowd only expects the momentum at FS8 and FIT House to continue growing. It’s a confidence the brand feels it earned with its “lead, don’t chase” mindset and in what consumer signals continue to indicate.

“I’ve been very excited to see the new memberships in our studios growing and people training for all sorts of events coming in to utilize our workouts,” Dowd said. “It’s also exciting to see the overall growth of health and wellness; people are drinking less and working out much more. It’s a great time to be a part of this industry and it’s not gonna slow down.”

That said, the brand plans to stay hungry, continue looking for what’s next and maintain its position as a leading fitness facilitator.

“As members evolve, we will be ready because we remain vigilant in our commitment to evolve with them and even lead the way with our experienced team dedicated to creating an amazing workout experience in our studios,” Dowd said. “We also have a few surprises we are working on that will continue to keep us ahead of the pack.” ●

THE CASE FOR WELLNESS EVERYWHERE, IN EVERYTHING

SHA Wellness CEO Alfredo Bataller may run a luxury health clinic, but he's a firm believer that wellness starts in the home, and should travel with you everywhere you go. **by Collin Helwig**



WELLNESS SHOULDN'T BE restricted to any singular, stationary spot. ✨ That's according to Alfredo Bataller, the CEO of SHA & AB Living Group, which hosts luxury health clinics that deliver high-end, impactful wellness services around the globe. The brand currently has locations in Mexico and Spain. ✨ But while Bataller intends to continue growing SHA, with plans to open a United Arab Emirates location this year, he believes the future of wellness should extend far beyond the physical confines of his clinics. Both as an industry and species, he argues there's more for us to optimize in more places than one.

"We've been understanding health for the last century as not being sick, but health is much more than that," Bataller said at the ATN Innovation Summit 2026. "It's high performance, to bring your senses and capabilities to the next level, and to live a life joyful, playful and with the best intensity possible."

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Bataller believes we need to rethink what wellness opportunities can be and where to find them. People should recognize their houses, offices and cars not just as homes, places of business or transportation tools, but as platforms to improve daily living.

"It's funny, because 90% of our life is indoors," he said. "Everybody cares about the conditions of air pollution, but what about your home? What about the places where you spend most of your time? Consider a house a tool for longevity with everything related — materials, air, water, sleeping and all the services from the front of the table like food, to screening and monitoring at home."

Several wellness brands have already recognized these gaps, or in their case, opportunities, to make healthier living a seamless part of the everyday experience. Companies like Bon Charge, Theragun and HigherDose are just a few of the many organizations with wellness products that weave naturally into daily routines, such as Bon Charge's red light toothbrush.

DON'T GROW THOUGHTLESSLY

For wellness operators and owners, it's easy to get excited about these opportunities once they're recognized. However, Bataller argues against expanding services simply for the sake of expansion. His brand approves just 6% of the roughly 300 wellness amenities it evaluates each year for potential inclusion in SHA programming.

"It's a lot of work to analyze them all and to differentiate what's noise, what's just marketing and what's science-based," Bataller added.

Bataller shared that he practices prudence in a similar regard when it comes to physical expansion. In service and efforts to scale, preserving your



brand identity must remain a priority.

"We don't want to create too many SHAs around the world," he said. "We don't want to dilute the brand."

BRINGING MORE CONSUMERS INTO THE WELLNESS WORLD

Nevertheless, Bataller indicated there are also widening opportunities for wellness operators through new demographics. Bataller said when he first launched SHA roughly 20 years ago, older adults largely made up their attendance. However, that's no longer the case.

"The average age of our guests was the age of our parents," Bataller said. "They were arriving already with illnesses or tiredness. Now, you go to SHA and see people who look amazing. You see athletes, young people and models."

Bataller chalked that change up to the increased education around the importance of wellness. He also noted that SHA, as a luxury retreat, often attracts CEOs and other high-performers looking to optimize their health.

"Confidentiality is rule number one for us," Bataller said. "But, it's true. We have the most interesting people — from presidents to royal families or Forbes list members — everybody's coming for high performance."

Looking to the future, Bataller mentioned solutions or treatments related to the brain as the most promising growth vertical in wellness.

“Sleeping is the best biohacker in the world, so anything related to sleep, stress control, brain stimulation, memory, focus, your emotions and everything that goes into having a holistic approach to a peaceful equilibrium is going to present a huge opportunity.”

— Alfredo Bataller, SHA & AB Living Group



"The number one reason is stress," he said. "Sleeping is the best biohacker in the world, so anything related to sleep, stress control, brain stimulation, memory, focus, your emotions and everything that goes into having a holistic approach to a peaceful equilibrium is going to present a huge opportunity, especially with the technologies coming out and the tools that will absorb our attention."

He also predicted we'll see notable improvements in the speed and accuracy of health diagnostics via technology. That'll also continue to upgrade personalized services, such as nutrition and supplementation.

Additionally, Bataller expressed that tech will generally democratize more wellness services, which promises to propel the industry forward as well.

"What's going to come in longevity, wellness, biohacking in the next 10 years is a progress that we haven't seen in the last 100," he said. ■

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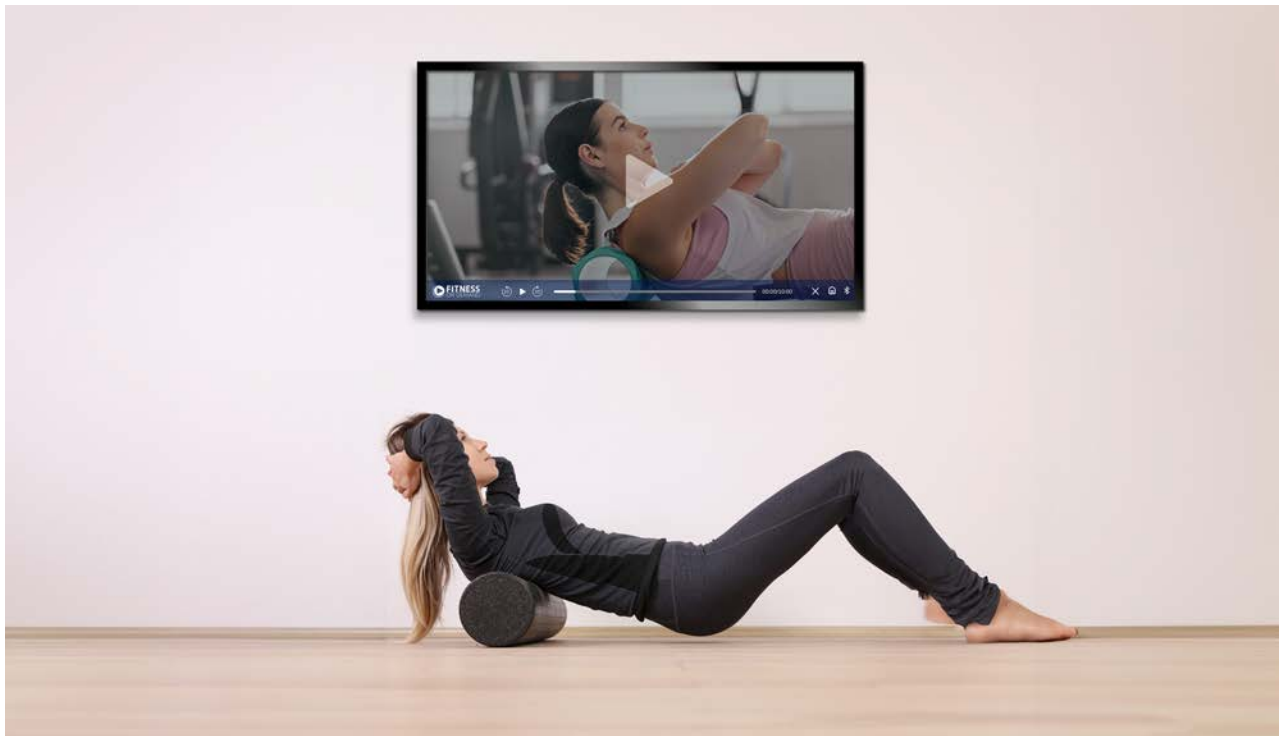
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Talk to Our Team

WHAT THE SUCCESS OF FITNESS ON DEMAND'S RECOVERY TOUCHSCREEN REVEALS

Over a year removed from its launch, Fitness On Demand shares how its Recovery Touchscreen's simple, efficient delivery system is allowing operators and consumers to keep pace with the recovery boom.



G

GYM OPERATORS already have a lot of competing responsibilities. They must find space for as many pieces of equipment and amenities as possible in a fixed footprint. They need to keep up with ever-changing consumer demands without blowing past their budgets. And that's in addition to managing staff, overseeing back-office operations and handling the countless other responsibilities that come with running a fitness business.

It can all feel overwhelming. That's especially the case when new verticals like recovery emerge, which require them to rethink

everything about how their physical space, team and time are allocated.

That's what compelled Fitness On Demand, a leading omni-channel platform for fitness businesses, to launch its Recovery Touchscreen, a platform that provides guided stretching, breathwork and meditation content. The product, launched in early 2025, not only alleviates owner and operator burdens, but supports the broader health movement that's continuing to pick up momentum.

"The conversation has moved beyond calories burned and workouts completed," said Andy Peat, CEO of Fitness On Demand. "People are paying much more attention to longevity, mobility, stress management, sleep quality and overall well-being. Recovery sits right at the center of all those trends."

MAKING RECOVERY ACCESSIBLE

As Peat noted, the consumer interest in recovery is widespread. Fitness On Demand reports a growing appeal across a vast spectrum of consumers. That includes business professionals using mindfulness and mobility sessions to manage stress and other adults enjoying guided stretching to support everyday movement.

"We expected strong engagement from athletes and highly active members, but we're seeing recovery resonate with just about every demographic," Peat said.

But while all operators now acknowledge the consumer interest in recovery, only a fraction have the means to properly address it. Not everyone can



Recovery content tends to appeal to a much broader audience than traditional fitness programming alone and creates more reasons for members to engage.”—**Andy Peat**, Fitness On Demand



afford recovery-specific trainers or equipment. Some operators simply don't have the time or space for classes either.

With this cohort, the Recovery Touchscreen makes a significant impact. With bluetooth capabilities and recovery-focused classes that don't require equipment or staff, the product can live in any dead space and immediately turn it into a recovery training hub.

“Members can access guided stretching, mobility, yoga, breathwork, mindfulness, warm-ups and cool-downs whenever they need them,” Peat said. “There's no need to wait for a class to start or for a staff member to be available. You don't need a six figure recovery buildout to start meeting member demand. You simply need an accessible place to start.”

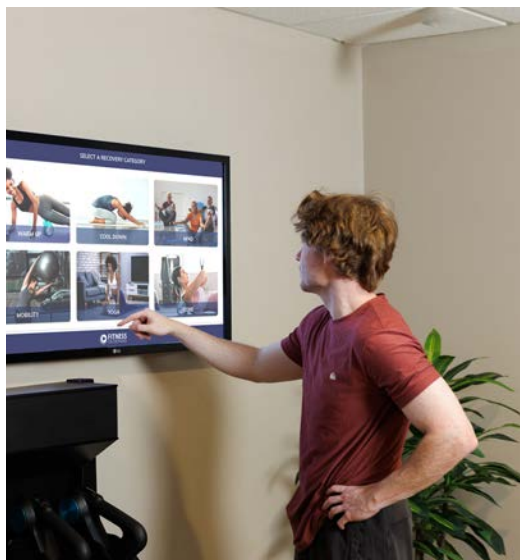
EXPANDING THE PROGRAMMING

The Recovery Touchscreen offers flexibility in content as well as placement. Fitness On Demand has continued to upgrade it with more diverse programming in the months following its launch.

“When we launched the product, many people still associated recovery with post-workout stretching,” Peat said. “Today, members are using recovery content to improve mobility, manage stress, support healthy aging, prepare for workouts and build sustainable wellness habits. That's influenced a lot of the decisions we've made around the platform.”

Fitness On Demand recently expanded the Recovery Touchscreen's content library, introduced a wider variety of session lengths and made adjustments to the platform to make it more intuitive for both members and operators.

“Members should be able to walk up to the screen and get started immediately, while operators should be able to implement and manage the experience without



adding significant work for their team,” Peat added. “If recovery isn't practical and achievable for operators to deliver, it never becomes accessible to members in the first place.”

BOOSTING ADOPTION

The way brands utilize the Recovery Touchscreen continues to evolve as well. Peat noted they're often displayed during gym tours to help operators pitch prospective members with visible recovery offerings. Some staff members also leverage touchscreens to care for clients when occupied elsewhere.

“A lot of personal trainers incorporate the touchscreen into the programs they're building for their clients,” Peat said. “This ensures they always have a guided cool-down session, even when their trainer isn't available.”

Peat also argues that employee usage encourages members to follow. The trickle-down bolsters engagement and retention as members commit themselves to accessible programs.

“Gyms really see engagement go up when their team uses it,” he said. “We've heard from a few customers that when employees started explaining how they use it to members, that personal

connection was really powerful and helped break down some of the ‘gymtimidation’ that can come with new products or equipment.”

CAPITALIZING ON THE OPPORTUNITY

This infatuation with recovery isn't relative to wellness alone, either. Fitness On Demand reports that recovery content consistently ranks among the more established modalities, such as strength or cardio, when compared across its entire digital platform.

“That tells us recovery isn't something members only think about after a tough workout anymore,” Peat said. “It's becoming part of how people approach their overall health and well-being.”

While notable, it's not a shock to Peat and the Fitness On Demand team, which recognizes recovery's ability to attract people with different goals and backgrounds.

“For operators, that's a huge opportunity,” Peat said. “Recovery content tends to appeal to a much broader audience than traditional fitness programming alone and creates more reasons for members to engage.”

Peat expects more operators to leverage this momentum going forward as well, including those involved in multi-family housing, corporate wellness or hospitality facilities. It coincides with the demand for more connected health offerings, which Fitness On Demand always keeps in mind while innovating as well.

“The future of recovery is closely tied to the rise of omnichannel fitness,” Peat said. “Members don't separate their wellness journey into ‘in-club’ and ‘digital’ experiences. They're looking for support when and where they need it. That might be a guided recovery session in the club after a workout, a mobility routine at home or a mindfulness session during the workday. That's where solutions like the Recovery Touchscreen fit in.” ●

WEARABLE MAKERS EYE HEALTHCARE AS THE NEXT FRONTIER

Top wearable brands are linking sleep, recovery and activity data with medical records and bloodwork, but their healthcare ambitions are bumping up against regulatory boundaries.

by Elizabeth Ostertag, Ani Freedman, Courtney Rehfeldt and Josh Liberatore



THE WORLD'S BIGGEST wearable makers are no longer content to simply track workouts, sleep and recovery. They're building partnerships with clinicians, labs and health platforms as they position biometric data as a tool for preventive care, and, eventually, an essential part of the broader healthcare system. ✨ Industry reports estimate that the wearables market will climb from roughly \$52 billion back in 2024 to nearly \$190 billion by 2032, driven by demand for hyper-personalized health insights and efforts to integrate trackers into healthcare and corporate wellness. That growth has pushed leading brands to behave less like device companies and more like health platforms.

Brands like Oura, Ultrahuman, Whoop, Apple and Garmin have spent recent months and years turning rings, watches and sensors into broader systems built around stress, sleep, biomarkers and AI guidance. Hardware updates still mattered, but most of the heavy lifting happened in software, partnerships and how data is being used in real-world settings.

OURA BRINGS WEARABLE DATA INTO CLINICAL CARE

Oura has built a massive following by helping consumers obsess over sleep scores and recovery metrics. Now it wants clinicians in on the action.

The Finnish smart ring maker, now valued at roughly \$11 billion, has partnered with Fullscript, a care platform used by providers and patients to manage diagnostic testing, build personalized supplement plans and order recommended products in one place.

With Oura in the mix, the smart ring's biometric insights will be integrated into Fullscript's platform, giving its more than 125,000 providers access to patients' wearable data, including sleep, readiness and activity trends, provided patients opt in. Clinicians can then use those insights to help inform care decisions.

Kyle Braatz, Fullscript's co-founder and CEO, says the partnership marks a major step in real-time, whole-person care.

"Oura's continuous health signals are powerful on their own, but when paired with Fullscript's clinical insights, lab data and personalized protocols, they become transformative," he said. "Providers can now bring more context to treatment conversations and ongoing care management, allowing for more comprehensive care, all without leaving their existing workflow."

Midi Health, the celeb-backed virtual care platform focused on women's health, also plans to bring Oura data into its provider workflows.

"Patients don't just want more data — they want providers who can translate that data into care that feels



personal, timely and relevant to their everyday lives," Midi Health co-founder and CEO Joanna Strober said, adding that the integration will give patients more tailored treatment plans and more meaningful follow-up.

Oura has tested this model before, partnering with Maven Clinic last year to bring biometric data into its virtual care platform for women's health, intended to tailor guidance on fertility, pregnancy and menopause.

The smart ring maker is also getting in on the GLP-1 boom. Through a partnership with Eli Lilly, Oura is providing free ring sizing kits to members of the pharmaceutical company's LillyDirect digital health platform.

Oura recently introduced GLP-1 Insights, a feature that lets members log medication doses, side effects, weight changes and related biometric data in one place. Its Lab Uploads feature also allows users to import lab results and view blood biomarkers alongside their ring data.

"As more people use GLP-1 therapies, there's an opportunity to better support

▲ Oura has partnered with Fullscript to manage diagnostic testing, build personalized supplement plans and order recommended products all in one place.

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“**As more people use GLP-1 therapies, there’s an opportunity to better support the day-to-day habits that influence outcomes. ... not just in weight on the scale, but in how people feel and function every day.**” —Dr. Ricky Bloomfield, Oura

the day-to-day habits that influence outcomes,” said Oura chief medical officer Dr. Ricky Bloomfield. “By integrating daily habits with real-time biometric insights, we can offer a more connected and personalized approach to support lasting results — not just in weight on the scale, but in how people feel and function every day.”

WHOOOP CONNECTS BIOMETRICS, LABS & MEDICAL RECORDS

Whoop, the Boston-based maker of the world’s most popular screenless wearable, isn’t shying away from healthcare, either.

Advanced Labs, built with Quest Diagnostics, lets members order curated blood panels covering roughly 60 biomarkers and see those results inside the app, mapped against months of strain, recovery and sleep data.

“This isn’t just a product launch. It’s a new chapter for Whoop and for our members,” Whoop founder and CEO Will Ahmed said of the platform. “We’ve taken everything we’ve learned over the past decade and built a platform to help our members perform and live at their peak for longer. We’ve held nothing back.”

Whoop also recently announced a collaboration with HealthEx to connect medical records and biometric data.

The platform will allow Whoop members to combine their medical history with continuous biometric insights in one secure place. Users can put metrics like recovery, strain and sleep in context with chronic conditions, recent procedures or medication changes to access recommendations reflecting a broader health profile.

“Whoop members track their health in incredible detail, and that data can be transformative when paired with their full medical record,” said HealthEx co-founder and CEO Dr. Priyanka Agarwal. “Bringing comprehensive health history into the Whoop experience, alongside daily recovery, strain, and performance metrics, gives members a complete picture of their health. That’s the foundation for personalized, consumer-driven care that puts people in control, meeting them where they are already managing their health.”

The partnership reflects Whoop’s



▲ **Patrick Mahomes wearing a Whoop 4.0.**

broader shift toward personalized health technology that leans into healthcare — something that until recently got the brand into regulatory trouble.

Last year, Whoop clashed with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which warned that its Blood Pressure Insights feature could not legally be marketed without regulatory clearance, arguing it qualified as a medical device and lacked required premarket authorization.

But the FDA recently dropped its enforcement against Whoop following planned changes to the feature. In a closeout letter dated June 17, the agency said it “does not intend to enforce the device statutory and regulatory requirements for your product as modified.”

Whoop plans to change the design, which previously insinuated diagnostic categories of blood pressure, to display results “without discreet classifications.”

GARMIN ENVISIONS SMARTWATCH-ENABLED HEALTHCARE

For Garmin, the future of healthcare will be found on people’s wrists.

At the 10th annual Garmin Health Summit in Prague, the tech company pointed to a future where fitness trackers and smartwatches are integrated into global healthcare systems, giving doctors access to data like sleep and heart rate to inform treatment plans and allowing insurers to leverage large biometric data sets.

Garmin calls the movement “smartwatch-enabled digital health.”

“Garmin’s business strategy is to be an ecosystem player,” Scott Burgett, senior director of Garmin Health Engineering,

told Athletech News at the event. “When you look at the breadth of our wearable products, the breadth of our data, and the ease of integration – we’re agnostic between iOS and Android – we really are the best company (to work with).”

Executives touted Garmin’s long battery life and biometric sensors, which track metrics including stress, heart rate variability and skin temperature, as advantages in supporting doctors, healthcare companies and clinical researchers.

“It’s so important that you can put on a wearable and leave it on for seven days,” Burgett said. “Every time you take it off, there’s a chance you might not put it back on.”

Garmin established Garmin Health in 2014, growing it into a B2B solution for healthcare, research and clinical trials, insurers, gyms, fitness brands and corporate wellness programs. Its wearables have been used in more than 1,000 research studies covering sleep, well-being, rehabilitation, physical activity and disease management.

WEARABLES MOVE INTO PREVENTIVE CARE

The healthcare opportunity could eventually extend well beyond the fitness-minded consumers who first embraced wearables.

Researchers at the University of Arizona have developed a wearable designed to detect subtle early signs of frailty, a condition linked to higher risks of falls, illness and hospitalization.

Worn on the lower thigh with a soft mesh sleeve, the device analyzes factors such as leg acceleration, symmetry and step variability.

“The current model of care is lagging behind,” Philipp Gutruf, the study’s senior author and associate department head of biomedical engineering, said. “Right now, we often wait for a fall or hospitalization before we assess a patient for frailty. We wanted to shift the paradigm from reactive to preventative. This device allows clinicians to intervene early, potentially preventing costly and dangerous outcomes.”

The device points to a potential new use case for wearables, one that looks beyond optimization and toward serving aging populations. ■

WHAT OPERATORS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COMMERCIAL COLD THERAPY

As cold therapy becomes a permanent part of fitness and wellness facilities, operators are discovering that commercial success depends on purpose-built equipment and the systems needed to support a consistent, safe and reliable member experience.

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THE WELLNESS INDUSTRY

has settled the question of whether consumers want cold therapy.

They do.

The bigger question facing operators today is whether they're prepared to deliver it.

As cold plunge becomes a fixture in clubs, recovery studios and wellness facilities, operators are learning that commercial cold therapy comes with operational realities that don't exist with most other recovery modalities. Water quality, sanitation, compliance, maintenance and temperature consistency are all part of the member experience, and the infrastructure must be there to support it.

"The success of a cold therapy program is determined long before the first member takes the plunge," says Ben Gilliam, Commercial Sales Specialist of Chilly GOAT Cold Tubs.

Cold therapy's rapid rise has created an interesting evolution. What began with residential tubs on patios and in garages quickly found its way into fitness clubs and recovery studios as operators respond to growing consumer demand.

As a result, many facilities enter into the space with equipment originally designed for home use,



only to discover that commercial environments create entirely different demands.

As cold therapy moves from wellness trend to permanent infrastructure, operators are discovering that success depends on much more than adding another recovery modality. It requires planning, purpose-built equipment and an operational strategy designed for long-term performance.

THE OPERATIONAL SIDE OF COLD THERAPY

For many operators, the learning curve begins after installation.

"The biggest issue is capacity," Gilliam says. "Smaller chillers designed for one or two people a day in a backyard simply can't keep pace with dozens of members cycling through every day, and water temperatures can creep up during peak hours."



Operators who get this right treat cold therapy as core infrastructure, not a novelty feature, and that mindset shift changes how they train staff, monitor water chemistry, follow maintenance protocols, and choose the right cold tub from the start.” —Ben Gilliam, Chilly GOAT



Behind the scenes, water quality is a constant operational priority as well.

“This is especially true if you’ve chosen a cold tub that wasn’t built for commercial use,” Gilliam says. “You’re dealing with body oils, bacteria and debris at a volume a backyard tub was never designed to handle.”

That means frequent water testing, balancing water chemistry, cleaning or replacing filters on a set schedule and periodically draining and refilling the tub — not simply topping it off. If any of those steps are skipped, water quality can deteriorate quickly.

“Once members notice cloudy or unpleasant water, that’s a hard thing to win back,” Gilliam says. “It’s not complicated work, but it has to happen consistently, and that consistency is where a lot of facilities fall short, particularly with equipment that wasn’t designed to make it easy.”

Unlike a red light therapy unit or compression system that simply turns on and off, a cold plunge operates as a continuous water system that requires filtration, sanitation and ongoing monitoring.

“The biggest shift is that members now expect cold therapy to just work, the same way they expect a treadmill to turn on or a sauna to be hot. If the water’s too warm, cloudy, or the unit’s down for maintenance, that’s a visible failure to the member — it shows up as a complaint, not a shrug.”

Reliability becomes the operational priority: the water needs to stay clean and the temperature needs to hold steady, day in and day out, regardless of how many people use it.

“Operators who get this right treat cold therapy as core infrastructure, not a novelty feature, and that mindset shift changes how they train staff, monitor water chemistry, follow maintenance protocols, and choose the right cold tub from the start.”



ENGINEERING A COMMERCIAL SOLUTION

Those operational realities ultimately shaped the development of the Chilly GOAT Alpine PRO.

Rather than adapting a residential product for commercial use, the company designed the system specifically for fitness clubs, wellness centers, physical therapy clinics and other high-volume environments where consistency and reliability are essential.

“As we saw more facilities struggle with cold tubs that weren’t built for commercial realities, we made a deliberate decision to engineer a solution specifically for that environment,” Gilliam says.

The Alpine PRO combines commercial-grade chilling capacity with automated water management designed to reduce staff burden and simplify day-to-

day operations. It continuously monitors sanitizer and pH levels, adjusting water chemistry automatically every 30 seconds. Remote connectivity allows operators to monitor system performance through a digital portal.

The system is also certified to NSF standards for water safety, VGB compliant for bather safety, and certified to UL 1563 as a complete cold tub unit, not simply as a collection of individually certified components assembled.

“That last distinction matters more than most operators realize,” explains Gilliam. “A tub built from certified parts isn’t the same as a certified tub, and that difference has real implications for liability and health code compliance. Most facilities shopping for a commercial cold tub don’t know to ask for this, and that’s exactly the gap the Alpine PRO was built to close.”

Those details may not be visible to members, but they directly influence the experience members receive every day.

As recovery becomes a more integrated part of the member journey, Gilliam says facilities are incorporating cold therapy in many ways.

“Some offer private rooms with scheduled time slots, others offer an open setting where members use modalities as they become available, and others are dedicating entire areas with multiple cold tubs where members can recover side by side,” he says.

One of the most popular configurations is pairing cold plunge directly with sauna. Contrast therapy, alternating between heat and cold, has become a draw and gives facilities a reason to invest in both modalities together.

In the end, Gilliam says, “What’s clear is that cold therapy fits naturally into whatever recovery environment a facility is building, as long as the infrastructure is there.” ●



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