

BodPod Testing Offered by College

Written by Debbie Schwanke

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Students enrolled in the Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) program at Colby Community College are being trained on state-of-the-art equipment that measures an individual's percent and absolute amounts of fat and lean body mass. The BODPOD is used to measure body mass and estimate body composition. In addition, the BODPOD estimates the resting metabolic rate (RMR) and Total Energy Expenditure (TEE) in those over 10 years old.

"The BODPOD was purchased with funds from a Perkins' grant," said PTA program director Pat Erickson. "We are the only facility with a BODPOD from Denver to Kansas City."

The BODPOD uses whole body densitometry to estimate fat and lean mass. To accomplish this, users get inside the unit and allow the air to be withdrawn. A computer printout is provided following three short tests. The entire process requires about 10 minutes per person.

The printout includes weight, percent of body fat and percent of lean mass. A certain amount of fat is necessary for good health. Fat plays an important role in protecting internal organs, providing energy and regulating hormones. For men, the minimal amount of essential fat is approximately 3-5 percent. For women, essential fat is approximately 12-15 percent. If too much fat accumulates over the years, health may be compromised. Lean mass is everything except the fat. It includes muscle, water, bone and internal organs. Muscle is the metabolic engine of the body that burns calories (fat) and plays an important role in maintaining strength and energy. Healthy levels of lean mass contribute to physical fitness and may prevent conditions such as osteoporosis.

"The estimated resting metabolic rate represents the minimum energy needed to support the body's basic physiologic function at rest," said Erickson. "The results show three values--the resting metabolic rate, physical activity, and thermic effect of food. This information will assist a person in planning how much exercise and how many calories are necessary to lose weight."

The college is making the BODPOD available to the public at a cost of \$10. This includes the initial test and retesting after the recommended time frame.

"The Thomas County Meltdown participants recently used the BODPOD," said Erickson.

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“Others who are interested may contact me at the college for information about how to test. There are certain criteria required for accurate results. The BODPOD is accurate for anyone over 10 years old to a weight of approximately 525 lbs.”

The BODPOD has proven to be more accurate than either single or double impedance tests which have been utilized during the past years.

“This is the Gold Standard in body fat testing,” said Erickson. “We are very fortunate to have this available at Colby Community College.”

The Physical Therapist Assistant Program at CCC is a two-year program. The freshman year (pre-PTA) is open to all students and consists of prerequisite courses. Admission to the sophomore year is limited. An interview process occurs each spring to determine who will be admitted for the second year. The PTA program Board Certification pass rate (3-year average) is 93 percent.

CCC is recognized for having an exceptional PTA faculty. Erickson, who has her doctorate in physical therapy, has over 38 years of experience in physical therapy. Instructor Kathy Robert, a certified physical therapist assistant, has her PTA degree from Colby Community College and a bachelor’s degree from Pittsburg State University.

The job outlook for PTA graduates is excellent with an average starting wage of \$19-\$25 per hour.

For more information, contact Erickson at 460-5445.