

Shifting the Healthcare Paradigm: The Promising Potential of Lifestyle Medicine

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Dear readers, In this editorial we intended to bring your attention towards lifestyle medicine.

Lifestyle medicine (LM) is a relatively new approach to healthcare that is rapidly gaining popularity. This approach is based on the premise that the choices we make in our everyday lives can have a profound impact on our health, and that we can use these choices to prevent and treat chronic diseases.^{1,2} Lifestyle medicine (LM) is a “medical specialty that uses therapeutic lifestyle interventions as a primary modality to treat chronic conditions including, but not limited to, cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, and obesity”.¹ Various lifestyle medicine colleges & certified boards are providing training in form of courses/degrees for physicians to become certified lifestyle medicine clinicians.¹ Lifestyle medicine certified clinicians are trained to apply evidence-based, whole-person, prescriptive lifestyle change to treat and, when used intensively, often reverse such conditions.^{2,3} At its core, lifestyle medicine is about promoting healthy habits in all aspects of life. This includes diet, exercise, stress management, and social support. By focusing on these key areas, lifestyle medicine practitioners aim to help people achieve optimal health and wellness.

Lifestyle Medicine is based on six pillars – healthy diet (whole food & plant pre-dominant food), regular physical activity, good sleep, stress management, avoidance of risky substances and positive social connections.^{4,5} It recognizes that the choices we make in our daily lives, such as what we eat and how much we exercise, can have a profound impact on our overall health and well-being. Lifestyle medicine is based on six key pillars, which are discussed below:

Healthy Diet:

Healthy diet is one of the foundational pillars of lifestyle medicine. A healthy diet is one that is high in whole,

unprocessed foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein sources. It is also low in saturated and trans fats, added sugars, and salt. Eating a healthy diet can reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.

Regular Physical Activity:

Regular physical activity is another key pillar of lifestyle medicine. Exercise helps to improve cardiovascular health, maintain healthy body weight, and reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as cancer and dementia. It also improves mental health, reduces stress, and increases overall quality of life. The American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per week, such as brisk walking or cycling.

Stress Management:

Chronic stress has been linked to a number of health problems, including heart disease, obesity, and depression. Stress management is a critical pillar of lifestyle medicine, and can include practices such as mindfulness meditation, deep breathing exercises, and yoga. Reducing stress can help to improve mental health, boost immunity, and reduce the risk of chronic diseases.

Good Sleep:

Sleep is a critical component of overall health, and lack of sleep has been linked to a number of health problems, including obesity, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. Getting a good night's sleep is a pillar of lifestyle medicine, and can include practices such as developing a regular sleep routine, creating a relaxing sleep environment, and avoiding stimulating activities before bedtime.

Cite this article as: Suvvari TK, Ingawale SM. Shifting the Healthcare Paradigm: The Promising Potential of Lifestyle Medicine. Global Journal of Medical Students. 2022;2(3):1–2.

Submitted 02-02-2023

Accepted 20-02-2023

Published 11-03-2023



Access this Article Online

Scan this QR Code

<https://doi.org/10.52314/gjms.2022.v2i3.91>

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Avoidance of Risky Substances

Risky behaviors such as smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, and drug use have been linked to a range of health problems, including cancer, liver disease, and addiction. Avoiding these behaviors is a critical pillar of lifestyle medicine, and can help to reduce the risk of chronic diseases and improve overall health and well-being.

Positive Social Connections:

Social connections have been linked to better mental health, reduced risk of chronic diseases, and increased longevity. Building positive social connections is a pillar of lifestyle medicine, and can include practices such as spending time with loved ones, joining community organizations, and participating in group activities.

The benefits of lifestyle medicine are numerous. By adopting healthy habits and making positive changes to their lifestyles, people can reduce their risk of chronic diseases, improve their mental health, and increase their overall quality of life.⁶ In addition, lifestyle medicine can help to reduce healthcare costs by reducing the need for medical interventions and medications. Lifestyle medicine is not a one-size-fits-all approach.⁷ Practitioners take into account each individual's unique needs and circumstances, and work with them to develop a personalized plan for optimal health and wellness.⁸ Lifestyle medicine is not meant to replace traditional medical care, but rather to complement it.

In conclusion, "The Future of Health is Lifestyle as Medicine" – So, start following lifestyle medicine and pave your way to optimal health and wellness.

END NOTE

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Conflict of Interest: None declared

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