

Lifestyle Medicine: Prescriptions for Better Health

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SFP2024; 50(9)

Lifestyle medicine promotes lifestyle change as the main modality to prevent, treat, and reverse chronic disease by replacing unhealthy behaviours with healthy behaviours. It adopts an evidence-based and holistic approach to medicine that encapsulates medical, behavioural, environmental, and motivational principles.

In 2019, non-communicable diseases made up approximately 80 percent of the total disease burden in Singapore, with chronic disease and mental health conditions accounting for the leading causes of mortality and ill-health.¹ The Global Burden of Disease Study 2019 found that an estimated 35 percent of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) in Singapore could be reduced by decreasing modifiable risk factors such as poor dietary habits, smoking, physical inactivity, obesity, elevated blood pressure, glucose, and cholesterol through early intervention.¹

Lifestyle medicine can play an effective and important role by creating personalised and sustainable management plans for patients that focuses on physical activity, nutrition, sleep, stress, and substance use.^{2,3} By addressing these domains holistically, multiple modifiable risk factors or chronic diseases can be addressed simultaneously, especially when lifestyle medicine is combined with medical treatment.

Family physicians are well positioned to integrate lifestyle medicine principles in their everyday practice by leveraging on well-established doctor-patient relationships. They can also collaborate with other healthcare professionals to help their patients sustain these healthy behaviours.

This issue of the *Singapore Family Physician* provides an overview on how family physicians can champion and prescribe lifestyle medicine in their practice to improve patient health and well-being.

In Unit 1, Mr Ryan Ong provides practical strategies that family physicians can adopt to aid patients in developing healthy eating behaviours.

In Unit 2, Dr Fadzil Hamzah gives an overview on how physical activity can be integrated in various patient populations and the benefits of exercise.

In Unit 3, Dr Wee Xue Ting how family physicians can address obesity in clinical practice.

In this issue, A/Prof Goh Lee Gan has selected ten current readings on topics related to lifestyle medicine in various patient populations and settings.

This issue of the *Singapore Family Physician* also includes an original article by Ms Susan Tan that highlights the role that health and wellness coaching can play in primary care.

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