

The Transformative Power of Lifestyle Medicine

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The rapid advancements in technology and medicine have revolutionized the diagnostic and treatment options but failed to provide sustainable health solutions. Lifestyle medicine has emerged as a beacon of hope for individuals looking for sustainable health solutions. An approach that focuses and emphasizes lifestyle modification in dealing and averting chronic illnesses, is not just a trend but a paradigm shifts in our concept of wholeness and quality of life.¹

Lifestyle Medicine

All over the world the load of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) is on the rise, contributing for 70% of total mortalities globally.² The Pakistan, ranked the fifth most populous country facing the dual challenge of communicable and noncommunicable diseases. Among them, hypertension is the most prevalent NCD, affecting approximately 38.7% of the population, followed closely by diabetes at 14.6%.

Lifestyles are the primary drivers behind obesity, hypertension, diabetes, cancer, Alzheimer's disease, and chronic respiratory conditions.³ The major cause of illness and mortality established after analysis of data from 190 countries was poor dietary habits.⁴

LM addresses the root causes of diseases in contrast to traditional medicine, which primarily relies on treatment using pharmacological interventions and surgical procedures.

The Evidence Behind Lifestyle Medicine

Extensive research has been done to generate convincing evidence supporting the efficacy of lifestyle interventions. Globally low use of fresh produce, unrefined grains, nuts, seeds and excessive intake of sodium are major risks contributing towards death and disability.⁵ It has now been established that

alteration in dietary habits can largely decrease the risk of hypertension, cardiac disease, diabetes, and certain cancers.⁶⁻⁷ Regular physical activity not only improves cardiovascular health but also reduces anxiety and depression leading to better mental health. Furthermore, practices such as resting sleep, mindfulness and stress reduction can lead to improved emotional resilience and better coping strategies.

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite its promise, lifestyle medicine faces several challenges. One significant hurdle is cultural factors and engraved dietary habits besides the entrenched nature of conventional medical practices, poorly trained primary care physicians and socioeconomic factors limiting access to healthy foods, protected and healthy environments for exercise, and mental health resources, creating disparities in health outcomes.

Health care providers education and training are the most crucial steps to integrate LM into primary care. A survey reported that physicians acknowledged having received no or very little training to advise regarding lifestyle modification.⁸ The American college of lifestyle medicine and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) are proactively addressing the issue, with provision of resources and offering board certification.

A Call for Action

Lifestyle medicine represents a paradigm shift in how we approach health and wellness. However, the greatest challenge is to incorporate LM evidence-based modalities into the health systems and healthcare industry. Adoption of the principles of lifestyle medicine will help to reduce the commercial

agriculture's carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions. It will not only protect human health but also a strategy for the conservation of natural resources.⁹⁻¹⁰

Conclusion

In conclusion, the time is now to advocate lifestyle medicine and harness its transformative power for a healthier future.

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