Activating Employers as Agents of Change in the Implementation of Lifestyle as Medicine

Dr. Dexter Shurney
President, Blue Zones Well-Being Institute

Dr. Sara S. Johnson
Co-President & CEO, ProChange Behavior Solutions
Senior Research Fellow, HERO

June 7, 2023
thank you
Activating Employers as Agents of Change in the Implementation of Lifestyle as Medicine

Objectives:

– Facilitate and accelerate the implementation of Lifestyle as Medicine by identifying pathways for employers to:
  • Create the conditions for Lifestyle as Medicine to be integrated into employees’ health and well-being offerings
  • Relate Lifestyle as Medicine to key business outcomes
  • Consider how they can extend the influence of their whole-person health initiatives into their communities
  • Advocate for Lifestyle as Medicine with their health plans, brokers, and government officials
Advisory Board Members
• Mary Delaney
• Dr. Padmaja Patel
• Dr. Eduardo Sanchez
• Dr. Dexter Shurney
• Dr. Terri Stone

Other Expert Advisors
• Dr. Diana Han
• Dr. Michael Parkinson
• Dr. Kavitha Reddy
• Dr. Kenji Saito
• Joel Spoonheim
• Dr. James Tacci
• Bert Wachtelhausen
• HERO Board
• HERO Advisory Group

Employers
• Carmel Clay Schools
• Rosen Hotels & Resorts
• Johns Hopkins Medicine
• Hasbro
• Victoria Secret
• Goodwill
Lifestyle medicine 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. 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. Applying the six pillars of lifestyle medicine—a whole-food, plant-predominant eating pattern, physical activity, restorative sleep, stress management, avoidance of risky substances and positive social connections—also provides effective prevention for these conditions.
Lifestyle as Medicine involves implementing a continuum of health-equity centered, comprehensive, integrated, evidence-based initiatives in multiple domains (including healthy eating as characterized by a whole-food, plant-predominant eating pattern; regular physical activity; adequate and restorative sleep; stress management; positive and meaningful social connection; time in nature; and avoidance of risky substances) as the foundational, first-line of efforts to promote whole health.
Benefits of Lifestyle Medicine

Six in ten adults in the US have a chronic disease and four in ten adults have two or more.

90% of the nation’s $4.1 trillion in annual health care expenditures are for people with chronic and mental health conditions.¹,²
Diet and Disease Reversal

Reversal of Coronary Disease Achieved with Plant-Based Diet

Coronary angiograms of the distal left anterior descending artery before (left bracket) and after (right bracket) 32 months of a plant-based diet without cholesterol-lowering medication, showing profound improvement. Used with permission from Dr. Caldwell B. Esselstyn, Jr.
(Source: Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease by Dr. Esselstyn.)
Research now reveals that sufficiently intensive lifestyle interventions can produce remission of T2D with similar success to bariatric surgery, but with substantially fewer untoward side effects.
Achieving the Quintuple AIM with a lifestyle medicine-first approach to real health care
Benefits of Lifestyle Medicine

Kilograms of greenhouse gas emissions per kilogram of food

- Beef: 70.6
- Lamb: 39.7
- Shellfish: 26.9
- Cheese: 23.9
- Fish: 13.6
- Pork: 12.3
- Poultry: 9.9
- Eggs: 4.7
- Rice & Grains: 3.6
- Milk: 3.2
- Tofu: 3.2
- Legumes: 2
- Breads & Pastas: 1.6
- Fruit: 0.9
- Vegetables: 0.7
- Nuts: 0.4

https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(21)00250-3/fulltext#seccestitle10
Employers Can Play an Important Role in Advancing Lifestyle as Medicine

Healthy Lifestyle — Prevention — Treatment

Healthcare System
- Multidisciplinary Teams of Evidence-Based Healthcare Providers Led by Board-Certified Specialists
- Evidence-Based Programs
- Value-Based Care Models
- Virtual Care/Telemedicine

Community
- Strengthening Social Contract
- Safe and Walkable Communities
- Access to Healthy Food Options

Legislation
- Retailers
- Food is Medicine

Policy Makers
- Public-Private Partnerships
- Addressing Unmet Social Needs

Employers
- Strategic Planning
- Policies
- Leadership Support
- Conductive Environment
- Supportive Culture
- Norms
- Conditions of Work
- Supportive Managers
- Evaluation
- Evidence-Based Programs
- Peer Support
- Lifestyle as Medicine Champions
- Lifestyle as Medicine Employee Resource Group
- Authentic Success Stories

Health Equity-Centered Approach
Guiding Principles: Driving Health Equity in the Workplace

Practice intentional inclusion at all levels of the organization, including but not limited to shared decision-making, ensuring participation and listening to perspectives of individuals from historically excluded populations.

Adopt policies, practices and programs that address the historical legacies of structural inequities and how current systems, practices and norms may perpetuate inequity. Explore and acknowledge the organization’s role in these histories and systems.

Eliminate structural racism and bias to promote health equity and improve employee health and well-being.

Commit to practicing allyship, modeled and supported by leadership, to promote health equity.

Adopt a common language guiding dignity and culturally sensitive language.
Guiding Principles

• Employ an Equity-Centered Approach that Optimizes Whole Health for All
• Collaborate with Aligned Stakeholders to Advance Lifestyle as Medicine
• Recognize that Lifestyle as Medicine is a Continuum
• Treat Lifestyle as Medicine as a Team Sport
• Be Inspired by Success Stories
• Rely on Evidence-Based Interventions
• Make a Compelling Business Case (Based on More than Cost Savings)
Internal Strategies

• Elevate Lifestyle as Medicine to a Strategic Objective
• Create and Enforce Supportive Policies
• Provide Visible Leadership Support for Lifestyle as Medicine
• Create a Conducive Environment & Supportive Culture
• Consider Whether Conditions of Work are a Social Determinant
• Deploy Strategic Communications
• Create Organizational Norms
• Enable Supportive Managers
Internal Strategies

• Align All Internal Stakeholders
• Conduct Rigorous, Multi-Level Evaluations
• Implement Tailored, Evidence-Based Programs
• Involve Lifestyle as Medicine Champions
• Build In Peer Support
• Use Storytelling
• Start Small and Build Momentum
External Strategies

- Modify Benefit Design to Increase Access to Lifestyle as Medicine
- Actively Engage in Advocacy
- Create Consortiums or Multi-Employer Trusts to Increase Purchasing & Negotiating Power
- Address the Individual and the Collective (Community)
- Create a Mechanism for Sharing Employer Best Practices
- Shift Quality Standards
- Seek out Partners in The Community
How Can We Support Employers’ Efforts to Advance Lifestyle as Medicine?

• Garner national media attention
• Create recognition strategies
• Connect them with resources
Full Plate Living Nutrition Programs
A Free Service of Ardmore Institute of Health

https://www.fullplateliving.org/
The CEO Pledge for Physical Activity - a signature initiative of the Physical Activity Alliance - proudly supports the Active People, Healthy Nation goal to help 27 million Americans become more physically active by 2027.
https://parkrxamerica.org/patients/write-your-own-nature-prescription.php or https://parkrxamerica.org/