



# Prescribing Lifestyle Medicine: Participant Survey



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## ABSTRACT

As obesity rises worldwide, chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes mellitus, consequently escalate as well. Health behaviors such as regular physical activity, healthy eating patterns and weight management will successfully reduce the prevalence of such chronic illnesses. However, these behavioral changes are rarely counseled or implemented by physicians, who have received limited training in Lifestyle Medicine in their undergraduate medical careers. To combat an increasingly overweight population and provide physicians with the knowledge to counsel in Lifestyle Medicine, Harvard Medical School, Department of Continuing Education will release a new online course "Prescribing Lifestyle Medicine for Weight Management" in the fall of 2005.

A voluntary survey will be administered before and after completing the online course to determine the effect of this online course on physicians' personal health behaviors, professional counseling habits and knowledge of Lifestyle Medicine. Course participants volunteering to enroll in the study will complete a set of survey questions prior to beginning the online course, a post course survey upon course completion and a 90-day follow up. The surveys will measure participants' current knowledge, confidence and importance of Lifestyle Medicine counseling in their professional practices, and personal health behaviors, such as exercise regimens, stress management, and eating/nutritional habits.

The hypotheses of the study are that providing physicians with information on stress management, weight control, exercise regimens and healthy eating behaviors will alter physicians' personal health habits. These outcomes will be measured by changes in physical activity, weight, stress management and eating behaviors from the pre course survey to the 90-day follow up.

Additionally, the study hypothesizes that training physicians in counseling in Lifestyle Medicine will modify physicians' confidence and importance to counsel patients in healthy lifestyle choices. Data comparing responses from the pre course survey, post course survey and 90-day follow up will measure these outcomes.

The final hypothesis is that the online course will change physicians' professional attitudes toward counseling patients on Lifestyle Medicine. These results will be measured by changes in perceived barriers to counseling such as reimbursement, poor patient compliance, and lack of time, knowledge and materials, from the pre course survey to the 90-day follow up.

## COURSE ABSTRACT

### "Prescribing Lifestyle Medicine for Weight Management."

Harvard Medical School, Department of Continuing Education  
Online Curriculum: <http://cmeonline.med.harvard.edu>  
Available Fall 2005

Course Director: Edward M. Phillips, M.D. [ephillips1@partners.org](mailto:ephillips1@partners.org)

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#### Program Description:

This 4-credit, interactive, case-based, online, course educates physicians about the fundamentals of lifestyle counseling for weight management:

- Essentials of weight management principles: energy balance, food substitutions
- Assessment through body mass index (BMI), waist girth, pattern of weight gain.
- Physical Activity and Exercise recommendations.
- Principles of stress management.

The material is presented as five physician-patient interactions that demonstrate patient centered approaches to health care consultations. The course assesses the learner's knowledge and use of behavior change strategies and principles of health psychology derived from Motivational Interviewing and Stages of Change including:

- Confidence and importance measurements
- Reflective listening
- Summarize/feedback
- Affirmation
- Open-ended questions
- Shifting responsibility and control to the patient
- Help patient assess stage of readiness for target behaviors.

More than a dozen handouts accompany the course for use by the physician and patients. Personal lifestyle choices of the participating physicians are addressed in the curriculum.

#### Background:

The twin epidemics of overweight/obesity and sedentary behavior will cost over \$90 billion annually in the United States. Medical intervention often focuses on drugs and surgery to treat obesity and maintain weight loss while modifying patients' lifestyle is not considered frontline in a physician's arsenal for addressing excess weight.

Despite the evidence that lifestyle medicine is a cost-effective, underutilized strategy, physician counseling on weight management has declined. The marked infrequency of physician counseling on obesity is a lost opportunity to use authority to initiate lifestyle change. Moreover the lack of explicit statements from physicians recommending weight management is often perceived as condoning the patient's behavior. In short physicians must learn to assess and recommend lifestyle changes.

Physicians report that they avoid counseling patients due to lack of time, lack of materials, decreased confidence in the patient's mastery of this intervention, lack of training, and the physician's personal lifestyle choices. Physicians have little preparation in their formal education and there remains a dearth of materials and training specific to physicians.

## SURVEY

Gender:  
Email:  
Country:

### PRE-TEST

- In an average week, how many patients do you see?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- What percentage of these patients do you perceive to be overweight or obese?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- How do you currently approach weight loss and lifestyle choices with your patients? Check all that apply.
  - do not discuss
  - handout/written material
  - refer to specialist
  - refer to nutritionist/dietician
  - refer to support group (e.g. Weight Watchers)
  - advise diet
  - advise patient to "lose some weight"
  - prescribe pharmaceutical medication
  - refer to health club
  - refer to health or wellness coach
  - recommend physical activity/exercise
- How do the following factors affect your lifestyle counseling of patients?
  - limited time  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
not important very important
  - lack of reimbursement and other incentives  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
not important very important
  - lack of knowledge/skills  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
not important very important
  - lack of materials  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
not important very important
  - perceived poor patient compliance  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
not important very important
  - your weight  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
not important very important
- Rate your current knowledge on lifestyle medicine.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
none at all extensive training/experience
- How confident are you that your patients comply with a significant part of your lifestyle recommendations?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
not confident very confident
- How confident are you in discussing lifestyle changes with your patients?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
not confident very confident
- How important is discussing lifestyle changes with your patients?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
not important very important
- Rate the following items from 1 to 10 based on your personal health behaviors.
  - weight  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
underweight normal overweight
  - healthy eating habits/nutrition  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
unhealthy healthy
  - stress management  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
Unmanageable stress manageable stress
- How often do you accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity per day? Pull down menu with options never, 1 day, 2 days, 3 days, 4 days, 5 days, 6 days, 7 days.
- How confident are you in your ability to manage your weight?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
not confident very confident
- How important is weight management to you?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
not important very important
- What is your occupation?  
Pull down menu choices: physician, physical therapist, nurse, personal trainer, nutritionist/dietician, psychologist, medical student, exercise physiologist, other- if other leave blank to fill in answer
- Year of birth:
- Height: (please complete in ft/in. or cm)
- Weight: (please complete in lb or kg)
- What year did you begin practicing?
- Do you smoke?

### POST COURSE SURVEY

- What were your motivations for taking this online course? Check all that apply.
  - CME credit
  - Frustration with patient's lack of compliance
  - Personal interest
  - Requirement
  - Other, leave blank to fill in answer
- How confident are you in discussing lifestyle changes with your patients?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
not confident very confident

- How important is discussing lifestyle changes with your patients?  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
not important very important
- Rate your current knowledge on lifestyle medicine.  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
none at all extensive training/experience
- Would you like to be contacted to participate in future studies on educating physicians in lifestyle medicine?  
Option: yes or no  
If yes, please provide contact information:  
Email: fill in blank  
Office phone number: fill in blank

### 90 DAY FOLLOW-UP

- How do you currently approach weight loss and lifestyle choices with your patients? Check all that apply.
  - do not discuss
  - handout/written material
  - refer to specialist
  - refer to nutritionist/dietician
  - refer to support group (e.g. Weight Watchers)
  - advise diet
  - advise patient to "lose some weight"
  - prescribe pharmaceutical medication
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  - lack of knowledge/skills  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
not important very important
  - lack of materials  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
not important very important
  - poor patient compliance  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
not important very important
  - your weight  
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- Height: (please complete in ft.in. or cm)
- Weight: (please complete in lb or kg)
- Do you smoke?
- Would you like to be contacted to participate in future studies on educating physicians in lifestyle medicine?  
Options yes or no  
If yes, please provide contact information  
Email: fill in blank  
Office phone number: fill in blank