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# SCIENCE OF LIFESTYLE; STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

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## ABSTRACT:

Since the start of 21<sup>st</sup> century the focus of medical treatment is changing from curative to the preventive medicine and now functional recovery and quality of life are the outcome of curative medicine. These new outcomes of modern medicine can be achieved through adopting the strategies that enhance wellness of patient.

The methods of enhancing wellness are in practice since centuries and their effectiveness has been handed down through word of mouth and tradition. They continue to evolve and were first documented in 1970s, by Canyon Ranch<sup>1</sup>, as a strategy to improve health through the principles of a healthy lifestyle. Its aim is to encourage individuals to choose and practice a way of living that help them live longer without a significant burden of disease.

Though the technological revolution of our age has provided a lot of ease yet the rapid pace of life has affected our lifestyles mostly in negative way as far as our health and wellness is concerned. It is the right time to reconsider our present lifestyles and make conscious efforts to incorporate those lifestyle strategies that can enhance wellness. There is considerable evidence that these methods are reliable, consistent, comforting and immutable. Adoption of healthy lifestyle practices at young age not only benefits but also facilitates the health and wellness in middle and elderly. Out of many lifestyle strategies<sup>2</sup> five have been organized and refined to enhance wellness and any physician can incorporate them in his practice regardless of his specialty. A prescription for wellness should include them:

The first strategy is exercise or promotion of physical activity that requires motivation, commitment, determination, dedication, and persistence. Studies have shown that like anti-stress medication the physical activity causes the release of important nerve growth factor in brain called Brain Derived Nerve-growth Factor (BDNF)<sup>3</sup> which cause regeneration of neurons in hippocampus a target of damage by cortisol during stress.

The second strategy is healthy nutritional practices that helps in preservation and improvement of a healthy life<sup>4</sup>. Many diet plans are recommended for the different diseases but a normal healthy diet include minimum amount of saturated & animal fats, along with minimum consumption of processed food. A healthy diet must include more vegetable and fruits of the season in addition to sea food. One should be mindful of his diet as more eating without realization is observed while working, studying and during stress. Making a regular diary of activities and diet is a good strategy for self-control.

Third strategy is management of stress which is an integral part of modern life. The stress not only have damaging effect on brain through cortisol but it also deteriorate the quality of life of individual. Due to stress many negative behaviors like smoking, alcoholism, and drug addictions also creep into the life of an individual. The healthy activities like exercise, meditation, religious activities, Yoga and a pleasure trip help in preventing the negative effects of stress<sup>5</sup>.

The fourth strategy is to enhance healthy, positive and constructive relationships for maintenance of wellness. These become more important as the person grow older. For healthy living each person should have close association with friends, colleagues and relatives. Starting voluntary social activity in community and helping those who are in need is also beneficial. Exploration and Participation in activities in community that expands the social capital of an individual is not only facilitate growth during working life but also proves an asset after retirement in adopting healthy life style.<sup>6</sup>

The fifth strategy is understanding the link between body, mind and spirituality. Usually Physicians are not talking about spirituality as believing it unscientific while majority of the people in this world believes in a power beyond themselves. A physician must acknowledge the different aspects of spirituality important for patient in the form of love, forgiveness, beauty, kindness, sharing, prayer and reciting holly verses. The meditation enhance the restfulness of mind and spirit. Evidence show that these types of activities promote healthy lifestyle dimension that lower the stress hormones and BP. The individual practicing spirituality psychologically experiences an inner sense of peacefulness, calmness, contentment, and relaxation. The electromagnetic studies also support positive changes in brain associated with these

experiences<sup>6</sup>.

Considering physician's authoritarian and care giver role, his guidance to understand and adopt the new way of healthy life style will open new opportunities for the patient to discover and practice better ways of living for improved quality of life.

Adoption of lifestyle strategies to enhance wellness can be used effectively by the physicians for the care of their patients<sup>7</sup>. These strategies complements the practice of every physician irrespective of their specialty. These strategies have preventive as well as therapeutic potential when they are integrated in management plan of patient. The incorporation of these strategies into clinical practice is strongly recommended as these are inexpensive, universally available and free of side effects. Although lifestyle strategies supplements the practices of the modern physician in enhancing their role as care giver but currently the promotion of it is often overlooked.

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