

PREVENTING CHRONIC DISEASE THROUGH A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CLINIC

Coliban Medical Centre - VIC

Central Highlands General Practice Network VIC

CHRONIC DISEASE CHANGE PRINCIPLE 4

Involve patients in delivering and developing care

Summary

Coliban Medical Centre (MC) noticed a high proportion of obese and overweight patients and decided to proactively tackle this issue by introducing a healthy lifestyle clinic. The aim of the clinic was to address the weight issues and prevent these patients from developing chronic diseases, which they are at risk of by being overweight.

Background

The practice is located at Kyneton, in the Macedon Ranges Shire, country Victoria. There are six GPs at the clinic with a 3.7 FTE, two practice nurses and several reception staff. Coliban MC also has a number of allied health professionals, including an osteopath, a chiropractor, psychologist, acupuncturist, masseur and Chinese medical practitioner.

The patient demographic is mostly made up of an elderly and low-middle socio economic population. The practice has been using the Pen tool since its inception and regularly looks at their practice population health indicators.

The aim of the healthy lifestyle clinic was to provide a safe environment for overweight and obese patients, where they would be comfortable exploring the reasons behind their weight gain and to

start making positive lifestyle changes that would help them to lose weight and lead a healthier lifestyle, decreasing their risk of developing a chronic disease

The Process

The healthy lifestyle clinic has been run for a number of years by the Practice Manager/ Practice Nurse/ Naturopath. She researched her own information to run the clinics and had a special interest in assisting people to live healthier lifestyles.

The clinics run for 12 weeks per patient, on an individual basis. They are now run by the two practice nurses, the second nurse being trained by the first. A GP will only attend the clinic towards the end of the session for Medicare billing purposes.

The clinics take a holistic approach to weight loss by investigating the reasons behind the obesity, such as eating disorders, depression, anxiety, self esteem issues, etc.

The initial consult takes approximately an hour, and all other sessions following run for 30-45 minutes.

Through the clinic, the two practice nurses use methods of counselling, massage and stress management, exercise, healthy eating, diet diary, sleep assessments, alcohol intake measures

and financial and social evaluations.

The twelve week course can be repeated by patients as many times as required, and patients can sometimes be referred to other health care specialists, including psychologists, financial counsellors, exercise physiologists and dieticians, etc, as required. Clinics are run out of a passion for preventative health for their patients, rather than as a business venture.

Outcomes

The clinic has proven to be quite successful among Coliban's patients, with positive verbal feedback received. The majority of patients who undertake the lifestyle clinic do lose weight, and those who do not, usually drop out early in the program, before positive results can occur.

The healthy lifestyle clinics have now been running successfully for over 18-months, with more patients returning to the clinic and others being introduced by word-of-mouth of the successful outcomes of the clinic.

The impact on the practice's capacity and the nurse's who run the clinic is quite high, particularly as there are few Medicare incentives in running the clinic. However, the patient results and positive outcomes outweigh these issues and strong word-of-mouth has popularised the clinic among the community.

Coliban's practice nurses have also gained invaluable personal skills through the program, including counselling, recognising when and where to refer patients, motivational interviewing techniques and health coaching skills.

Looking Forward

Coliban MC plans to continue running the clinics in the future, while continuously evolving and making improvements.

Conclusion

By introducing healthy lifestyle twelve week clinics for their obese and overweight patients, Coliban Medical Centre are proactively working to prevent chronic diseases within their patient demographic.

The lifestyle clinic uses a holistic approach to weight loss with proven successes and a greater demand through word-of-mouth throughout the community.

The practice staff are also building on their own personal skills by working with their patients on a variety of levels, including psychologically as well as physically.

"Being involved in the APCC Program has encouraged practices to form strong bonds and linkages with each other and share ideas and information long after the wave has been completed."

- Catherine, CPM

