

## CASE STUDY: COLIBAN MEDICAL CENTRE

# Healthy lifestyle clinic helps prevent chronic disease

After looking at measures recorded on their practice database, Coliban Medical Centre (MC) noticed a high proportion of obese and overweight patients. They decided to proactively tackle this issue by introducing a healthy lifestyle clinic. The aim of the clinic was to assist patients to address the reasons for their weight gain and assist them to make positive lifestyle changes, in order to decrease their risk of developing a chronic disease.

**Location:** *Kyneton, Victoria.*

**Staff:** *6 GPs (3.7 FTE), 2 practice nurses and reception staff. Coliban MC also has a number of allied health professionals, including an osteopath, chiropractor, psychologist, acupuncturist, masseur and Chinese medical practitioner.*

**Patients:** *The patient demographic is mostly made up of an elderly and low-middle socio economic population.*

**Goal:** *To assist patients to address the reasons for their weight gain and assist them to make positive lifestyle changes, in order to decrease their risk of developing a chronic disease.*

## BACKGROUND

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. At the clinic they are encouraged to start making positive lifestyle changes that will help them to lose weight and lead a healthier lifestyle, decreasing their risk of developing a chronic disease.

## PROCESS

The healthy lifestyle clinic has now been run for 18 months by Jackie, who is the practice manager, a practice nurse and a trained naturopath. Passionate about preventative healthcare and interested in assisting patients to live healthier lifestyles, Jackie researched her own information to run the clinics.

The clinics are run on an individual basis, and can vary in duration ranging from six to twelve weeks per patient. A second nurse has been trained by Jackie to assist in running the clinics. Each session is facilitated by one nurse, with a GP attending the clinic towards the end of the session to oversee the visit and complete the Medicare billing.

The clinics take a holistic approach to weight loss by investigating the reasons behind a patient's obesity, such as eating disorders, depression, anxiety and self esteem issues. The clinic content incorporates methods of counselling, massage and stress management, exercise, healthy eating, diet diary, sleep assessments, alcohol intake measures, and financial and social evaluations.

The initial consult takes approximately an hour, and all other sessions following run for 30-45 minutes. The 12 week course can be repeated by patients as many times as required. Patients are sometimes referred to other health care specialists, including psychologists, financial counsellors, exercise physiologists and dieticians as required.

## OUTCOMES

The healthy lifestyle clinics have been running successfully for over 18-months, with 89 patients attending, of which 81 have reported weight loss. Data indicated that many of the patients who did not lose weight had still made improvements adopting healthier lifestyles, and the patients who recorded no difference withdrew from the program before positive results could occur.

Most patients are self-referred and found out about the clinic through brochures and word-of-mouth, with some returning to the clinic and others being introduced by current and previous attendees.

### Outcomes since implementing the Healthy Lifestyle Clinic include:

- Weight loss from participation in the clinic has varied from 1kg up to 54kg, with an average weight loss of 8kg.
- Bloods are checked with the majority of the patients at the second week, and again at an appropriate time in the program to encourage the patient.
- Results have been considerably better for cholesterol, triglycerides, fasting blood sugars and blood pressure.
- Improvements are also visible in patient's mood, self image and lifestyle habits, as the patient is more aware of their dietary choices and exercise patterns and their general knowledge of health is increased.
- Patients report that they feel supported and often come to the session to de-stress. Patients adopt an interest in their own health and well being, one patient has even gone on to do a fitness course at TAFE.
- The practice estimates they make a small profit from the clinics.
- It offers health and lifestyle education for their registrars and it increases patient care.

- 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.

A case study on Coliban MC's Healthy Lifestyle Clinic was featured in the Central Highlands General Practice Network (CHGPN) 'The Population Health in General Practice Resource Kit' (available on the CHGPN website: <http://www.chgpn.com.au/>).

## LOOKING FORWARD

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

## CONCLUSION

By introducing healthy lifestyle 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.

***"THE APPC PROGRAM HAS POSITIVELY GIVEN CREDENCE TO A LOT OF WHAT WE COVER IN THE HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CLINIC. I NO LONGER FEEL LIKE A VOICE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS. THANK YOU!"***

***- JACKIE, PRACTICE MANAGER***