



RACGP Extended Skills Training Post | Lifestyle Medicine

Lifestyle-induced Chronic diseases such as T2DM, Hypertension, Ischaemic Heart disease, obesity, metabolic syndrome, a number of cancers, COPD and some generalised mental health disorders are the MOST common presentations in General Practice. GPs are well placed, for a range of reasons, to make a big difference in empowering patients to reduce their disease burden, reduce medication load, reduce health budget expenditure and ultimately improve patient and community health outcomes. Being able to make this difference as a doctor leads to a great sense of fulfilment, personally and professionally.

Historically, medical training curricula have fallen short in providing doctors with sufficient skills and confidence to target the “cause of the cause” and **coach** patients on healthy lifestyle choices and behaviours. The application of Lifestyle Medicine specifically by physicians who are *Intensivists* or Lifestyle Medicine certified, meaning they are certified through the International Board of Lifestyle Medicine and hold Fellowship through the Australasian Society of Lifestyle Medicine (ASLM), is a big step towards evidence-based models of care for chronic disease and co-morbidities.

A registrar engaged in Life Medical Centre’s Extended skills program in Lifestyle Medicine will learn how to apply a “whole-person, patient-centred care approach” for weight-loss and lifestyle modification from our Lifestyle Medicine certified doctors:

- Dr Michelle Reiss- GP, Lifestyle Medicine Intensivist, Fellow of ASLM. She was awarded the Australasian Society of Lifestyle Medicine’s Changemaker of the Year 2022 and is a finalist for 2023 as Lifestyle Medicine Pioneer (winner to be announced in September). Dr Reiss is also co-author of an international publication on Lifestyle Medicine Intensivist core competencies.
- Dr Clara Chu- GP, Lifestyle Medicine certified physician, Fellow of ASLM and certified Health Coach.
- Dr Simbai Mudzi- GP, Lifestyle Medicine certified physician.

Our model of care teaches how to assess and create action plans/lifestyle prescriptions for patients within the Bio-Psycho-Social framework, knowing that a whole-person approach is needed for effective sustainable change.

Registrars will also be guided on how to apply Motivational interviewing techniques (as outlined in the AFP Vol 41, No.9, Sept 2012) and be a Coach rather than an Expert to assist and empower patients to be accountable for their own healthcare. The model of care at Life Medical Centre is very much aligned with the Quintuple Aim approach and strongly endorses the concept of patient-centred care, health equity, clinician wellbeing, the pursuit of better health outcomes and lower healthcare costs.

Lifestyle Medicine can do more than reduce and reverse lifestyle-induced chronic diseases, hospital admissions and the burden on general practice itself. It’s application frequently leads to “de-prescribing” to reduce a patient’s medication burden, medicine expense and side-effects. In addition, Lifestyle Medicine carries very low costs, has no side-effects and in our experience ranks high for patient and provider satisfaction.

Since effective, sustainable lifestyle change requires regular support without creating dependence on the healthcare provider, the model of care sees more frequent patient follow up in a 1:1 capacity, either with the doctor or with our onsite interdisciplinary team. However, Life Medical Centre also uses Group Medical talks/ Shared Medical appointments to allow patient peer support, longer access to the healthcare team

and to reduce provider burnout. Evidence shows high value for Shared Medical Appointments and we can attest to that through our experience at our Centre.

The following summarises what a Lifestyle Medicine Extended Skills registrar can hope to learn at Life Medical Centre:

- Effective **Motivational Interviewing techniques** to be a “coach” rather than an “expert”
- Patient’s **Readiness to Change**:
 - Understanding the importance of assessing the patient’s stage of readiness
 - How to guide them through the phases of change until maintenance is reached, with the aim of long-term habit change
 - Understanding the effect of family members or friends on a patient’s own stage of change
- **Bio-Psycho-Social model of care**:
 - Learn a framework for whole-person history taking, assessment and structured action planning to assist with empowerment and to systematically support the patient’s *active* engagement in their own healthcare.
 - **Biological**:
 - Gain knowledge in the evidence-base for good gut health, healthy food choices, exercise, metabolic function, endocrine function, addictions cessation and sleep patterns.
 - Learn how to interpret metabolic inflammation in the biochemistry and metabolic dysfunction in the setting of obesity, and how to evaluate body composition versus BMI.
 - **Psychological**:
 - Understand the impact and effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences and other trauma on self-efficacy
 - Learn CBT and other psychology applications for generalised mood conditions and their impact both as cause and effect of overweight and chronic disease
 - Understand the role of our neurotransmitters and reward-seeking habits and how patients can overcome those behaviours.
 - **Social**:
 - Participate in, co-facilitate and see the impact of Group Medical Appointments on patient and provider satisfaction.
 - Function within an onsite Interdisciplinary team and learn effective utilisation of care plans, team care arrangements, health assessments (aged, middle-aged and ATSI), CDC program, etc.
 - Registrars can learn how to effectively participate in Case Conferencing with other onsite health professionals/allied health providers.
 - Registrars can join Life Medical Centre’s community programs such as our Walking groups and cooking classes
 - Effective **screening** for Chronic Disease, including Pre-diabetes, and ongoing **review of reversal and maintenance** when patient’s make progress. This often will necessitate the **safe “de-prescribing”** of medications.
 - **Applying Lifestyle Medicine** and assisting behaviour change through 1:1 contact and in a group-based setting.

- **Inter-disciplinary team care** by working with onsite Chronic disease RNs, Dietitian and Life Coach as part of the clinical team.

Registrar Orientation

- Orientation to the practice layout will be conducted by business owners, Dr Michelle Reiss and Mr Taylor Bartley.
- Registrars will be given our usual induction manual and will be trained in line with our induction training roster.
- Software, policy and procedure training will be conducted by our Operations Co-ordinator Kate Campbell, Dr Michelle Reiss and a clinical RN, as per our usual onboarding process.
- Payroll and all relevant admin procedures will be conducted by Mr Taylor Bartley.

Competency Assessment & Independent Practice of Lifestyle Medicine

- Initially the registrar will be educated around the Lifestyle Medicine specific evidence-base for lifestyle change and weight-loss. This means a full Bio-Psycho-Social understanding of a whole-person approach and management.
- Once the registrar is comfortable with the training and the supervisors feel the registrar has achieved a successful understanding, they will engage with patients directly 1:1 and join our Group Medical Appointments. These patients may be General Practice patients with usual chronic disease presentations, or patients referred or self-presenting to Life Medical Centre for Intensive lifestyle modification and weight-loss (since we function as a “specialist centre” too). Either way, the registrar will be equipped with the knowledge on how to approach these different presentations.
- Initially there will be sufficient time allocated for the registrar to ask questions of the supervisor/s and discuss the patient. As the registrar becomes more efficient, the time allocated between patients may be reduced.
- Our practice also holds monthly General Practice Clinical Rounds, as well as fortnightly Lifestyle Medicine specific Clinical Rounds to discuss case studies, policies and management. Registrars will be encouraged to actively participate and share cases for evaluation.
- During the Group Medical Appointments, the registrar will co-facilitate and gain even higher level of understanding of the psychological side of lifestyle change more specifically.
- It is anticipated that registrars will experience a sharp learning curve in the whole-person/patient-centred approach, Lifestyle Medicine-focussed application for chronic disease management, prevention and reversal.
- Registrars will also have the opportunity to learn from the clinical work of our onsite Dietitian, Life Coach and Chronic Disease RNs. We also work closely with Exercise Physiologists.

Registrar Safety & Well-being

- Initially registrars will receive orientation and evidence-based training only without patient encounters. This is anticipated to have a duration of approximately 2-3 weeks.
- Patient consultations will be booked as longer appointments with ample time for questions and discussion with supervisors, thereby reducing stress.
- As registrars become familiar with patients who follow up at more regular intervals for review, appointment times could be shortened without compromising access to supervisors.
- Registrars will have time allocated to breaks and lunch. They will not be required to work weekends.
- Some Group Medical Appointments are run afterhours on Thursdays and this will be taken into consideration of rostered work hours on that day.
- Registrars will be encouraged to “practice what they preach” by joining our team in social activities, our cooking classes and walking groups.
- Our practice prides itself in its “family”/team culture for all staff.
- The outside of workplace social activities and staff culture should assist in stress reduction and a sense of fulfilment and inclusivity.

Registrar Learning Activities

- Initial orientation and evidence-based education/training about Lifestyle Medicine, its Bio-Psycho-Social application and whole-person approach when assessing and managing patients.
- Exposure to our Intellectual Property being evidence-based handout materials and Powerpoint presentations.
- Ongoing guidance by supervisors 1:1, in particular Dr Michelle Reiss who is co-author on an international publication on Lifestyle Medicine Intensivist competencies and a pioneer of Lifestyle Medicine in Australia, as well as Dr Clara Chu who is also a Certified Health Coach in addition to being a GP.
- Ongoing guidance by supervisors within Group Medical Appointments on motivational interviewing techniques and some psychology applications to assist patients with behaviour change.
- “On the job” effective screening and management or reversal of Chronic disease with education gained by experience.
- Co-facilitation of Group Medical Appointments which will provide ongoing education in the presence of supervisors while providing direct patient care, as well as from onsite Allied Health team involved in the Shared Medical Appointments.
- Regular GP and Lifestyle Medicine-specific Clinical Rounds to build further knowledge, ask questions and engage in case presentations.
- Exposure to Inter-disciplinary Case Conferencing designed to achieve best team-based patient outcomes. Registrars will gain valuable experience by hearing how Allied Health approach patient care too.
- Registrars will gain a sound understanding of Medicare Billing policies, specifically for Chronic disease item numbers, Health assessments, case conferencing, CVC and ATSI.