**Message Platform April 2023**

***Goal of this message platform:*** *We will update and provide this document as needed to ensure the use of standard language and voice as part of our ongoing brand establishment and consistency. Use this document as a reference to describe lifestyle medicine and ACLM to colleagues, prospective members, the media, in social media, and where applicable to patients for common understanding of who we are and what we exist to do.*

**ACLM’s definition of lifestyle medicine:**  
Lifestyle medicine is a medical specialty that uses therapeutic lifestyle interventions as a primary modality to treat chronic conditions including, but not limited to, cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, and obesity.  Lifestyle medicine certified clinicians are trained to apply evidence-based, whole-person, prescriptive lifestyle change to treat and, when used intensively, often reverse such conditions. Applying the six pillars of lifestyle medicine—a whole-food, plant-predominant eating pattern, physical activity, restorative sleep, stress management, avoidance of risky substances and positive social connections—also provides effective prevention for these conditions. [updated May 2022]

**ACLM mission:**  
Advancing evidenced-based lifestyle medicine to treat, reverse and prevent non-communicable, chronic disease.

**ACLM vision:**  
A world wherein lifestyle medicine is the foundation of health and all health care.

**ACLM values:**  
Our work will be guided and informed by our beliefs and commitment to:  
**Evidence-based lifestyle medicine**: We claim results and outcomes supported by documented, verifiable evidence.  
**High standards:** We hold ourselves to the highest levels of competency, professionalism and ethics.  
**Integrity**: We act fairly, in good faith and honestly.  
**Financial transparency:** We undergo an annual audit of financials and take seriously our fiduciary responsibility to our members.  
**Health equity**: We recognize the impact of social determinants of health and strive to make lifestyle medicine accessible and effective for all.  
**Whole person health**: We value the many aspects of health and well-being required for health restoration. [updated April 2021]

**Lifestyle medicine positioning statement:**Lifestyle medicine can address up to 80% of chronic diseases. A lifestyle medicine approach to population care has the potential to arrest the decades-long rise in the prevalence of chronic conditions and their burdensome costs.  Patient and provider satisfaction often results from a lifestyle medicine approach, which strongly aligns the field with the Quintuple Aim of better health outcomes, lower cost, improved patient satisfaction, improved provider well-being, and advancement of health equity, in addition to its alignment with planetary health. Lifestyle medicine is the foundation for a redesigned, value-based and equitable healthcare delivery system, leading to whole person health.  [Approved May 2022]

**ACLM positioning statement:**As the nation’s only medical professional association representing the interdisciplinary field of lifestyle medicine, the American College of Lifestyle Medicine represents a galvanized force for change; members are united in their dedication to identify and eradicate the root causes of chronic disease, with the clinical outcome goal of health restoration.  ACLM closes the gap in evidence-based education in lifestyle medicine across the spectrum of pre- and post-professional training.  Along with training and support of its members in their individual practices, ACLM advocates lifestyle medicine as the first and optimal whole-person treatment option for all people, mitigating much of the non-communicable, chronic disease epidemic*.* [Updated May 2022]

**Pillars of lifestyle medicine:**

*Note: The six pillars of lifestyle medicine are: nutrition (specifically a whole-food, plant-predominant eating pattern), physical activity, restorative sleep, stress management, avoidance of risky substances and positive social connections. Each pillar influences the others. Implementing improvements in any of the pillars must take into consideration drivers of health (social determinants of health) that can impact successful behavior change.* [Added September 2022]

**Nutrition**

* While there is a wide spectrum of dietary patterns, diets that include an abundance of whole and minimally-processed plant foods are preferable.1
* Extensive scientific evidence supports the use of a whole-food, predominantly plant-based eating pattern as an important strategy in the prevention of chronic disease,2 treatment of chronic conditions and,3 in intensive therapeutic doses, reversal of chronic illness.4
* A primarily whole-food, plant-based eating pattern promotes overall health by increasing the intake of minimally-processed, nutrient-dense, fiber-rich, antioxidant-rich foods and beverages and decreasing intake of saturated and trans fats, refined carbohydrates, processed oils, added sugars, sodium, and chemical contaminants.5 By its nature, this eating pattern also lowers calories.
* For the treatment, reversal and prevention of lifestyle-related chronic disease, ACLM promotes6 eating a variety of minimally processed vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, legumes, nuts and seeds.

**Physical Activity**

• Although any amount of physical activity is better than none, it is important that adults engage in both general physical activity that offsets the negative effects of a sedentary lifestyle as well as purposeful exercise for targeted health outcomes as part of their weekly physical activity.

• ACLM supports the personalization of exercise/activity for each individual to maximize the benefit with minimal risk, especially for injury. Clinically experienced and certified exercise specialists in the fields of kinesiology, exercise physiology, physical therapy, or personal training should be included in lifestyle medicine team models of care, especially for those starting a new exercise program or want help in designing a safe and effective program.

• General physical activity can burn calories and is important in combating the negative effects of sedentary behavior; however, purposeful exercise improves cardiorespiratory and strength fitness and leads to substantial health benefits. These health benefits include reduction of blood pressure, weight, and risk of osteoporosis and dementia; prevention of and improved survival from several different cancers; and improvement in insulin resistance (a key factor in metabolic syndrome, diabetes, polycystic ovary syndrome and several other cardiometabolic disorders).

* Exercise prescriptions should be tailored and focused towards treatment and reversal of an individual health risks or disease conditions.

• ACLM supports the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations7 that adults 18-64 years old perform 150 to 300 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic physical activity, 75 to 150 minutes of vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity, or a combination of both weekly, as well as age-specific recommendations for other stages of life.

• ACLM also supports the ACSM recommendation that adults 18-64 years old do muscle-strengthening activities of moderate or greater intensity that involve all major muscle groups two to three days per week.8

**Restorative Sleep**

* Sleep is necessary for human life, and high-quality, restorative sleep is essential for health and well-being. Unhealthy sleep is associated with the most common causes of premature death and disability, and in many cases is directly responsible.
* The ACLM supports the American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommendations that most adults should sleep 7 hours or more per night, in alignment with their natural circadian rhythm, for optimal health.9 The National Sleep Foundation puts upper limits on sleep for adults at 7-9 hours;10 excessive sleep is associated with stroke and other conditions. Children require more, depending on age.11
* Adults with chronically insufficient or fragmented sleep can experience impaired memory, cognitive processing, mood, reaction time, self-control, social involvement, along with a high risk of dementia onset and progression, weight gain and glucose dysregulation. Poor sleep also has been shown to be directly related to cardiovascular issues such as atrial fibrillation and hypertension.
* Sleep insufficiency in children reduces academic and athletic performance and is associated with a higher prevalence of mental health and social problems, and crime in adolescents.
* Comprehensive lifestyle medicine assessments and interventions are essential in successfully optimizing sleep and its health outcomes.5
* Adults and children with sleep problems should discuss them with their healthcare providers.

**Stress Management**

* There are many things that can help manage stress and improve overall health. ACLM suggests partnering with an interdisciplinary health care team to determine a plan of action for helping patients reduce their stress levels.
* Stress management is an important component of care in working towards whole-person health.12
* The chronic stress of modern society has made it more difficult to practice healthy lifestyle habits and can exacerbate health issues such as cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance, sleep deprivation, depression, anxiety, weight gain, etc.
* Such things as planning ahead, budgeting, leaving earlier from work, and being proactive tend to reduce preventable stress.
* Chronic stress can cause poorer overall quality of life, decreased job and school performance, and lead to mental and physical health issues.13
* Communities of color are disproportionally affected by stress caused by bias and discrimination in addition to the social determinants or drivers of health,14 which are the **conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play.14**

**Avoidance of Risky Substances**

* Use of tobacco, alcohol, and non-prescription medications have been shown to increase the risk of chronic diseases and death.15, 16
* Treatments often take time, different approaches and many attempts.17 Patience and support are an important part of breaking risky substance habits.
* ACLM supports the National Institute on Drug Abuse’s position on utilizing known effective treatment models:15
  + Mental health treatment to help resolve underlying triggers, which may include counseling (individual or support groups)
* Medication-assisted therapies
* Use of other lifestyle medicine pillars (decreasing stress through exercise, healthy eating, improved sleep, decreasing stress through meditation and mindfulness, and improving social relationships)
* Combination of treatments with multiple modalities including support with medication.
* ACLM recognizes the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans’ recommendation that adults of legal drinking age can choose not to drink, or to drink in moderation by limiting intake to **2 drinks or less in a day for men or 1 drink or less in a day for women,** on days when alcohol is consumed.18 ACLM also recognizes AICR’s conclusions that for cancer prevention it’s best not to drink alcohol,19 and research showing that the level of alcohol consumption that minimized harm across health outcomes was zero.20

**Positive Social Connection**

* Research shows that having social connection is a key factor in human happiness and quality longevity.21, 22
* Social connections and relationships affect our physical, mental and emotional health,23 including prevention of dementia in older age.24
* In addition, people are more likely to adopt the health behaviors of others in their immediate social networks, including alcohol consumption,25 exercise,26 and diet.27
* Leveraging the power of social connections and social networks can help reinforce healthy behaviors.28

**ACLM’s “about us” statement:**   
Founded in 2004, the American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM) is the medical professional society for physicians and other professionals dedicated to clinical and worksite practice of lifestyle medicine as the foundation of a transformed and sustainable health care system. Practice involves the use of a whole food, plant-predominant dietary lifestyle, regular physical activity, restorative sleep, stress management, avoidance of risky substances and positive social connection as a primary therapeutic modality for treatment and reversal of chronic disease. ACLM educates, equips, empowers and supports its members as they provide evidence-based lifestyle medicine as the first treatment option in clinical practice and worksite settings through live and online CME- and CE-accredited events and educational offerings, certification, clinical practice tools, patient education resources, economic research, networking opportunities and advocacy efforts. Today, ACLM has nearly 10,000 members—and growing—across the world on every continent with 28 international lifestyle medicine societies represented by ACLM’s Lifestyle Medicine Global Alliance. Lifestyle medicine is one of the fastest growing career fields of medicine globally and holds the promise for true health reform as it addresses the root-cause of chronic illness. Board certification has been available through ACLM’s certification partner, the American Board of Lifestyle Medicine, since 2017.

**Disclaimer statement:**As an independent medical professional association representing the diverse interests of all our members in the provision of evidence-based lifestyle medicine education, practice support and advocacy, ACLM is not responsible to any religious, political or industry interest.

**ACLM’s dietary position statement:**For the treatment, reversal and prevention of lifestyle-related chronic disease, ACLM recommends an eating plan based predominantly on a variety of minimally processed vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds.  
 *(Editor’s note: ACLM supports a dietary spectrum and avoids use of “vegan” and “vegetarian” wording.)*

**ACLM’s diet-climate statement:**ACLM acknowledges that the leading cause of chronic disease and the leading cause of so many of our most pressing global sustainability issues is one and the same: our Western pattern diet.29-31 Shifting to a whole food, plant-predominant dietary lifestyle is optimal in order to protect human health and fight disease;32, 33 this dietary lifestyle pattern is also what is best for the planet, enabling us to preserve our precious natural resources, rein in greenhouse gas emissions, and feed what soon will be over nine billion people on the face of the earth.34-36

**ACLM’s obesity statement:**

Chronic disease clinical guidelines for multiple conditions, including overweight and obesity, promote lifestyle interventions as a first treatment. Patients’ best interests call for a compassionate, evidence-based approach addressing the six lifestyle pillars, as defined by the American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM), to achieve a goal of health restoration. These pillars include 1.) regular physical activity, 2.) whole-food, [plant-predominant nutrition](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2161831323002764), 3.) restorative sleep, 4.) stress management, 5.) positive social connection, and 6.) avoidance of risky substances; also acknowledging each individual’s lived environment and genetic predisposition, as many people live in a home or societal environment that promotes and exacerbates weight gain.

While adequately dosed lifestyle interventions may unilaterally achieve success, obesity is a complex, multifactorial disease wherein patients may require approaches beyond lifestyle alone. However, lifestyle interventions are too often not adequately “dosed” for success. Lifestyle medicine clinicians are trained to prescribe a therapeutic dose of all six pillars. Evidence supports the efficacy of these interventions in addressing the underlying causes of disease, including gut dysbiosis, endothelial dysfunction, oxidative stress, and chronic inflammation.

A comprehensive lifestyle medicine approach prevents and treats many other co-morbidities associated with overweight and obesity, including, but not limited to, hypertension, high cholesterol, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and arthritis, and a lifestyle medicine approach can also reduce the risk of many types of cancer. Lifestyle medicine must become the foundation of comprehensive treatment, with or without surgery and/or medications as adjunctive therapies. ACLM stands ready to be a resource to help clinicians and patients in treatment of [adult](https://connect.lifestylemedicine.org/viewdocument/calorie-density-infographic) and [pediatric overweight and obesity](https://connect.lifestylemedicine.org/viewdocument/beyond-the-numbers-a-lifestyle-med-2).

**ACLM’s non-discrimination statement:**The American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM) was founded upon and operates on the values of respect, integrity and trust for all whom we serve.

We are guided by our core values and our vision of lifestyle medicine being the foundation of health and all health care as a service to ALL people.

We are committed to providing a welcoming and inclusive environment for all who are touched by our organization, including, although not limited to, through employment, membership, elected leadership, appointed leadership, volunteer service, strategic partnership, or by engagement with ACLM as a subcontractor, vendor, or client.

In regard to any and all activities of operation, we do not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, religion, gender, gender expression, age, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status. These activities include, but are not limited to, membership application, hiring and firing of staff, nomination and election of leadership, selection of volunteers and vendors, and provision of services.

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