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## **An Assessment of Skills Before Pills, A Series Promoting Lifestyle Medicine**

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# An Assessment of Skills Before Pills, a series promoting Lifestyle Medicine

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South Burlington Family Medicine (Feb/Mar 2022)  
Mentored By Dr. Calkins





## Skills Before Pills

- A lifestyle medicine first approach to treating root causes of lifestyle related conditions
- Problem Identification: Negative lifestyle choices contribute to the leading causes of death in the US [1]
  - Tobacco use, poor diet, inactivity, excessive alcohol consumption
  - Effectively motivating lifestyle change is difficult
- Skills Before Pills is a novel, multidisciplinary, 8-week group appointment series aimed at promoting lifestyle change to address chronic medical conditions
- Need: Currently no program evaluation methods in place to assess patient satisfaction/commentary



## Public Health Cost

- The cost burden of chronic disease continues to increase in the US [2]
  - 2016: estimated cost of \$3.7 trillion
    - Over 50% of this cost was due to diabetes and cardiovascular conditions
- Lifestyle medicine interventions in primary care have been shown to improve quality of life as well as to have increased cost effectiveness when compared to the standard of care[3]



## Community Perspective

- Perspective from Dr. Whitney Calkins (board certified in Lifestyle Medicine)
  - Almost every chronic disease can be improved with lifestyle modifications
    - Skills Before Pills focuses on root causes instead of trying to fix things with a pill, though both are important in various circumstances
  - “Everyone should utilize lifestyle medicine because it addresses the root cause of chronic disease and therefore can be tremendously impactful on not just treatment, but reversal of disease.”
- Perspective from Trista Cousino, CCA
  - Has seen patients interested in getting off pills and motivated to make lifestyle change
  - Has already noticed changing patient behavior early on in the series
  - “Everyone should utilize lifestyle medicine because all of us could better our lives and situations and we all have room to grow by doing it.”



## Intervention

- Discussed opportunities for Skills Before Pills improvement with physicians and staff
- Recognized that a new program can benefit from feedback from participants on how it felt for them, what worked well, and what could be improved
  - Currently, no collection methods exist
- Designed and tested REDCap survey to be distributed to patients at the end of each Skills Before Pills series



## Results/Response

- Skills Before Pills faculty excited about the potential for the survey data
- As the current series has not completed, survey data is not yet available
- Expected to gain insight into series strengths/weaknesses that can be used to modify future iterations of the Skills Before Pills series, which will be offered routinely



## Limitations and Effectiveness

- Skills Before Pills is a small group series (<10 patients)
  - With such a small sample size, effectiveness of feedback may be limited
  - With increasing iterations of course and continued survey utilization, power of the data is expected to grow



## Recommendations for Future Projects

- Survey data can be used to guide future community project
  - Different ways to advertise series to increase community awareness?
  - Curriculum changes to increase effective information delivery?
  - Opportunity for longitudinal data collection after patients have completed the series to assess long-term benefit/perspectives



## References

1. Lianov, L., & Johnson, M. (2010). Physician competencies for prescribing lifestyle medicine. *JAMA*, 304(2), 202–203. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2010.903>
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