



Preface

Lifestyle modification



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Guest Editor

The past century demonstrated huge advances in scientific technology and the ability to cure many infectious diseases. During this time, we saw an increase in what are sometimes called “lifestyle diseases”; diseases that are associated with unhealthy behavioral patterns, such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes mellitus, and some cancers. Examples of unhealthy behaviors that are associated with chronic illnesses include overeating, not exercising regularly, inappropriate handling of stress, smoking, and not using worksite protective devices.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has again provided a 10-year plan to improve the health of the nation [1]. Healthy People 2010: Understanding and Improving Health is a comprehensive plan that contains specific objectives for improving public health. It provides a challenge to nurses and other health care providers to include health promotion and disease prevention in their daily practice.

To promote health, prevent disease, and ameliorate symptoms of existing diseases, individuals need to learn how to modify their lifelong patterns. The consistent integrated way of life of an individual—their lifestyle—is often described as a person’s lifelong patterns. Patterns are strong, developed over many years, and not easily modified. A comprehensive plan is needed to help individuals learn how to modify their lifelong patterns. Modifying behavior is more appropriate and realistic than changing behavior, which, by definition, means to make radically different. The term ‘modification’ is a more acceptable term to those involved in the process. Also, lifestyle modification implies application of new thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes that accompany the modified behavior.

The articles in this special edition on lifestyle modification have been chosen to represent a variety of lifestyle behaviors that, if modified, would improve the health of the nation. The authors describe the problems caused by the behavior, summarize previous research in the area, and present strategies for lifestyle modification. The authors have used a variety of theories on which to develop their interventions. We hope that readers will identify models and strategies to apply in their own settings.

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Reference

- [1] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy people 2010 (conference edition: 2 vols). Washington, DC: US DHHS; 2000.