

## **After the end of the first in Lithuania and the European Union Lifestyle Medicine clinical adaptation programme**

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that as many as 80% of all sick people who seek medical help are diagnosed with chronic non-infectious diseases: cancer, circulatory system disorders, increased blood pressure, type 2 diabetes mellitus, various forms of joint damage, obesity and other metabolic syndrome disorders. These diseases most often affect the elderly, but lately the number of people with chronic diseases has been growing intensely. It has been demonstrated the main reason for the increasing incidence of these diseases is the rapidly changing lifestyle that the body cannot adapt to.

The epidemic of chronic non-infectious diseases has become a big problem for the state of Lithuania. Growth in morbidity, in the background of a decline in the population, especially the working-age population (15-64), is a very unfavourable indicator of the country's economic development. It is known that the causes of chronic illnesses are often poor quality of food, lack of physical activity, psycho-emotional imbalance, life in an unhealthy environment, and addictions. Meanwhile, good health requires a stable, balanced social environment, healthy eating, adequate physical activity, mental and spiritual well-being.

Lifestyle Medicine (LM) is a new modern approach to healthcare, the emergence of diseases, their prevention and treatment by correcting the incorrect lifestyle of patients. This breakthrough in medicine opens new opportunities not only to protect and enhance health, but also to cure – to affect the course of chronic diseases towards a self-healing direction. LM is evidence-based field of medicine that changes the outdated, over-medically-mediated paradigm of medicine and opens up a whole lot of new opportunities for physicians, health promotion agents and traders. It opens up new fields that have not yet been practiced: Training of LM specialists, development and implementation of new LM methods and tools for the treatment of chronic illnesses in clinical practice. Integrating the lifestyle medicine into the health care system will open up new opportunities for the health insurance system, formulating the needs for creating a living environment favourable to health: new type of houses, villages, towns, new leisure and health tourism opportunities, healthy food, clothes, vehicles and other health-friendly activities.

Seeing this perspective, the Seimas, the Government of the country and all three of the universities training health professionals focus on the LM. It is very important to get familiar with LM achievements in foreign countries before introducing a new medical field into the country's health care system. This year, four cities of the country (Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Druskininkai) and three universities (Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda) offered opportunity for foreign visitors and Lithuanian doctors interested in LM issues to meet health professionals and politicians coming to our country from the five continents of the world and discuss the issues together. The visitors included the Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Commissioner VP Andriukaitis. He and other foreign visitors at the meetings spoke about the leadership of Lithuanian specialists in introducing the LM ideas into clinical practice in the EU.

We understand well that the LM implementation in practice requires well-trained qualified specialists in this field. The LSMU has already started preparing such specialists. The Faculty of Medicine of Vilnius University organized a working group that prepares the LM Master's degree program. From 2016 Klaipėda University offers a specialized bachelor's degree program with LM qualification specialization.

In order to integrate the LM into a health care system, in addition to specialist training, it is essential for the general public to demonstrate the clinical efficacy of LM in the treatment of chronic illnesses in patients. To achieve this goal, on March 12-20 in Druskininkai, for the first time in Lithuania and the European Union, the LM practical application course, called “Chronic diseases reversion prevention and treatment” was organized. The treatment course and the training for patients and specialists were conducted by famous specialists in the field of medicine from the USA and Canada: professor of preventive medicine, lifestyle change and epigenetics, manager of BLACH HILLS LM CLINIC healthy lifestyle John H. Kelly MD, MPH (USA), and nutritionist and author of 9 books Brenda Davis, RD (Canada).

A total 11 people attended the lifestyle program. Their illnesses and complaints were diverse: some had overweight, others – high blood pressure, and increased cholesterol levels in the blood. Among the participants, there were patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus, stroke, or even cancer. The medical course of lifestyle lasted for 10 days. It was started with an assessment of the somatic condition of each program participant, fully analyzing the available medical documentation, evaluating complaints and history of life, and collecting blood samples from patients. During the course, individual consultations were held with the LM doctors, nutritionist B.Davis, with Professor of epigenetics J.H.Kelly. The nutritionist assessed the eating habits of each participant, favourite foods, drinks and food supplements. She compiled and presented specifically tailored diet plan for each patient. During the consultation with the LM doctor, Prof. J.H.Kelly, together with his assisting specialists, they assessed the complaints of each program participant, the history of lifestyle, medical records, and medications used. He compiled and submitted an individually recommended lifestyle change plan for each patient and explained how this plan should be used. In addition to these consultations, the course participants had the opportunity to use physiotherapy, occupational therapy, water treatments and body massages. During the course, they participants attended the LM training conferences twice a day, on the basis of the CHIP methodology of the American Complete Health Improvement Program, and special lectures. The CHIP program is designed to provide participants with the knowledge on how to reduce the risk factors for chronic diseases and allow the conditions for the body to heal without the use of any other medical invasions. The aim of these actions was to encourage participants to voluntarily choose a balanced and fully-fledged diet (focusing on products of plant origin), increase physical activity, regulate disturbed psycho-emotional balance, and strengthen other health-promoting body systems. During the lectures, the participants had the opportunity to discuss directly and ask questions directly to B.Davis and J.H.Kelly.

Every day, patients were treated with balanced, healthy and complete food. The food was prepared by the US chefs Sally Kelly and Loreta Vainius, the MS Living Foods Nutritional Consultant site with local assistants. The eating regime was regular. After each meal, nutritionist B.Davis was explaining to participants the importance of choosing foods for the body, which products should be avoided in the daily diet, which products should be replaced by others when suffering from different chronic illness. The course included healthy food cooking lessons. The course participants were sharing healthy meal recipes. All the participants of the course were very pleased with the extremely delicious food.

All participants in the program each day, after 40 minutes were obliged to go for a walk in a quiet and relaxing forest environment. At the end of the course, patients were repeatedly questioned and blood tests were performed to them.

At the end of the course, all participants were satisfied with improved well-being and better health. The medical results were pleasantly surprising.

When leaving, Prof. J.H.Kelly provided objective data on the changes of patient condition in medical records to the course participants. He stated that as many as in 14% of the patients, during the 10 days of the LM training, total cholesterol decreased, the level of bad cholesterol decreased by 18%, blood glucose decreased by 6%, blood pressure decreased by 6%, quality of life according to the SF-36 score improved by 26%. These results allowed the professor of epigenetics J.H.Kelly, to state that balancing the environment can objectively positively affect almost all functions of the body. *“Nearly all chronic diseases can be turned towards the path of reversal, even the altered gene structure! Finally, we realized that our DNA is no longer our destiny, as we thought before. Conscious choice of healthy lifestyle: healthy diet and adequate physical activity along with balanced psycho-emotional state greatly alter the gene structure and function. Life changes are indispensable for optimizing epigenetic expression of genes”*, he said, in order to demonstrate that optimizing lifestyle and living environment can lead to irreversible, positive changes in health for patients suffering from chronic illness.

This was confirmed by the feedback from LM participants at the closing ceremony: *“We liked the courses, our cholesterol declines, weight fell, and it's unfortunate that we could not participate in this event 10 years ago, maybe I would never get cancer”*, *“We have received an extremely valuable theoretical insight of food, along with completely quality time spent in a healthy lifestyle medical school”*.

At the end of the first European Union LM clinical adaptation course, that is no longer doubt about the efficiency of the LM in the treatment of chronic non-infectious diseases. Of course, further research and action in an adapting the treatment techniques is required, however, subsequent prospects in this field of medicine and health protection are unquestionable.

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