

# Lifestyle Prescriptions

Prevention, early intervention and chronic disease management are priority areas in the new national quality and performance system for Divisions of General Practice. Lifestyle Prescriptions encourages general practice to focus on these priority areas by promoting and supporting positive lifestyle behaviour change in their patients.

Lifestyle Prescriptions (or Lifescripts) aims to build on preventive activities being undertaken in the primary health care system. Lifescripts provides general practice with tools to assist patients to make healthier lifestyle choices. Lifescripts builds on work undertaken on the SNAP risk factors (Smoking, Nutrition, Alcohol and Physical activity) and adds weight management as an additional risk factor.

Lifescripts provides a framework for GPs, practice nurses and staff in the general practice setting to bring lifestyle risk factors to the fore in their engagement with patients. Implementing Lifescripts involves: discussing risk factors with patients; setting lifestyle change goals; providing written lifestyle prescriptions; organising ongoing review of lifestyle risk factors; and referring patients to other services that support healthy lifestyle choices.

In 2004 the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing commissioned a consortium to produce a range of Lifestyle Prescription resources. The consortium comprised the Victorian Council on Fitness and General Health (VICFIT); the Centre for General Practice Integration Studies, University of NSW; the National Heart Foundation of Australia (NSW Division); School of Health Sciences, University of Newcastle; Department of General Practice, Flinders University; and Southcity GP Services.

The resources developed include:

- Waiting room materials
  - Checklist, Flyers\*, Poster\*
- Assessment guidelines
- Assessment tools
- Prescription pads
- Medical record summary stickers
- Practice manual
- Division manual
- CD Rom (includes motivational interviewing component)

(\*Including versions designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients).

In 2005 the Department commissioned the Divisions network to roll out the implementation of Lifescripts (including these resources). ADGP has received funding until June 2006 for a National Lifestyle Prescriptions Coordinator, and the Networks State Based Organisations (SBOs) have also received capacity to provide support to participating Divisions.

In its implementation Lifescripts will link into other Divisions programs such as practice nursing, chronic disease management, existing prevention programs and support offered to practices in establishing recall and reminder systems and referral protocols. The education and materials available through Lifescripts will add value to existing programs and priorities.

Participation in Lifescripts is voluntary and there are a range of options to ensure that implementation suits different practice settings. Lifestyle risk factor discussions might be implemented opportunistically when relevant to the patient consultation or practices might take a systematic, 'whole of practice' approach and integrate Lifescripts into clinical processes.

The Lifescripts methodology uses the 'five As' approach, Ask, Assess, Advise, Assist and Arrange. For practices engaging in systematic or structured implementation of Lifescripts the collaborative methodology of Plan, Do, Study and Act is also recommended.

Divisions are encouraged, where they have existing relationships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, to utilise the Lifescripts tools in conjunction with the Adult Health Check for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

For more information please contact:  
Megan Hansford  
Lifestyle Prescriptions Coordinator  
Australian Division of General Practice  
Ph: (02) 6228 0829  
Email: [mhansford@adgp.com.au](mailto:mhansford@adgp.com.au)

