

## **Innovative UPMC Lifestyle Medicine Institute to address root causes of chronic disease**

*The new center will meet growing demand for lifestyle health interventions related to diet, physical activity, sleep, social connectivity, stress and harmful substances.*

UPMC recently announced the creation of the UPMC Lifestyle Medicine Institute, an innovative health center dedicated to helping patients transform their health through evidence-based lifestyle medicine therapies that attack the root causes of disease and promote health and longevity.

The center, which opens Feb. 1, 2023, will feature services and resources including group coaching, a teaching kitchen and classes focused on food as medicine, obesity, brain fitness and health, arthritis, hypertension, type 2 diabetes and much more—all presented in a virtual format. It also will incorporate the Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP), which helps participants enhance their overall well-being and claim savings on their health plans.

Lifestyle medicine is an evidence-based therapeutic intervention based on six pillars:

1. A whole food, plant-predominant eating pattern
2. Regular physical activity
3. Restorative sleep
4. Stress management
5. Avoidance of harmful substances
6. Positive social connection

It is delivered by clinicians trained and certified in this specialty to prevent, treat and often reverse chronic disease.

According to the World Health Organization, 80% of heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes instances and 40% of cancer occurrences could be prevented, primarily with improvements to diet and lifestyle.

“There is a growing understanding that we have to transform the goal of health care in the United States from disease management to health restoration,” said **UPMC Integrative and Lifestyle Family Medicine Physician Michelle Thompson, DO**, who will lead the center. “UPMC Lifestyle Institute is an important step toward putting lifestyle medicine at the center of how we provide primary care across our entire system. It is really an innovative way to help people take control of their health and live their healthiest lives.”

The center will help meet a growing demand for lifestyle medicine interventions from patients and members of the community, she said. Virtual disease-specific group appointments for conditions such as hypertension, obesity and chronic pain will connect individuals dealing with the same conditions to learn management strategies while simultaneously building a sense of community and support, something which many people lacked during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Virtual group medical appointments will also allow UPMC to reach more people living in historically medically underserved communities and address the key health issues that disproportionately impact those communities.

“I have created hundreds of community programs in all aspects of healthy living, teaching kitchens and Shop with a Doc and have had upwards of 140 people show up to events to learn and participate in all realms of lifestyle medicine,” Dr. Thompson said. “There are no quick fixes to chronic disease and people want help learning how to make sustainable changes to their lifestyle that make a lasting impact. That is why we are so excited to open the UPMC Lifestyle Medicine Institute where we are redefining health care delivery using cutting-edge lifestyle medicine therapeutic modalities. After 16 years with UPMC, I am so excited to be creating a center of excellence in lifestyle medicine using evidence-based medicine to promote health, prevent and reverse disease and promote longevity.”

UPMC has already taken steps to incorporate lifestyle medicine into its physician training, adopting the *Lifestyle Medicine Residency Curriculum*, a comprehensive, applicable and flexible curriculum designed by the American College of Lifestyle Medicine (ACLM) for integrated implementation into medical residency programs; upon completion of the curriculum, residents will qualify for the American Board of Lifestyle Medicine certification exam. UPMC trains 180 resident doctors in family medicine each year.

UPMC also serves on ACLM’s Health Systems Council, an assembly of 73 health systems—a number that’s rapidly growing—across the nation that are actively integrating a therapeutic dose of lifestyle medicine into patient care, employee health and their broader communities.