

Creating a pro-active health care system to combat chronic diseases in Sri Lanka: the central role of preventive medicine and healthy lifestyle behaviors

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Abstract:

INTRODUCTION: The current burden and future escalating threat of chronic diseases, constitutes the major global public health challenge. In Sri Lanka, cardiovascular diseases account for the majority of annual deaths. Data from Sri Lanka also indicate a high incidence and prevalence of pre-diabetes and diabetes; 1 in 5 adults have elevated blood sugar in Sri Lanka. It is well established that chronic diseases share four primary behavioral risk factors: 1) tobacco use; 2) unhealthy diet; 3) physical inactivity; and 4) harmful use of alcohol. **AREAS COVERED:** Evidence has convincingly shown that replacing these behavioral risk factors with the converse, healthy lifestyle characteristics, decrease the risk of poor outcomes associated with chronic disease by 60 to 80%. In essence, prevention or reversal of these behavioral risk factors with effective healthy lifestyle programming and interventions is the solution to the current chronic disease crisis. **Expert Commentary:** Healthy lifestyle is medicine with global applicability, including Sri Lanka and the rest of the South Asia region. This policy statement will discuss the chronic disease crisis in Sri Lanka, its current policies and action implemented to promote healthy lifestyles, and further recommendations on preventive medicine and healthy lifestyle initiatives that are needed to move forward.