Journal Shares Medicine for Life

The Journal of the Oklahoma State Medical Association recently published work contributed by OU-TU School of Community Medicine and OU Hudson College of Public Health students – an exciting accomplishment for any student. But this publication meant even more to these students and their professor – it meant the opportunity to share on the topic of lifestyle medicine to a wider audience.

Marianna Wetherill, PhD, MPH, RDN-AP/LD, George Kaiser Family Foundation Chair in Population Health and Assistant Professor, describes the benefit derived from the recent addition of the OU culinary medicine program.

‘[This] allowed medical students and [physician assistant] students to learn about how nutrition is really central to not only preventing disease, but also treating it.’

And this, according to Wetherill, built enthusiasm for all the aspects of lifestyle medicine: nutrition, physical activity, stress management, healthy relationships and avoidance of tobacco and alcohol. This enthusiasm led MD-MPH students to take part in a series of research studies and narrative reviews related to the ways lifestyle affects health.

“I came to understand that so often medicine thinks about what happens in a hospital or in a clinic and lifestyle medicine kind of thinks about what happens outside of that … talking to people about their exercise or their diet and all the other factors that really contribute to their health,” says Daniel Huff, MPH, one of the student contributors as he explains the concepts behind lifestyle medicine.

Ashten Duncan, MPH, another student contributor, explains this style of medicine by posing questions, “What are people doing on a daily basis that either exposes them to some sort of risk for an adverse health outcome in the future, or … what are things that they do that afford them some sort of benefit or protection against those risks?”

So, with the studies in hand and a collaborative desire to promote the ideas behind addressing patient lifestyles in medicine, Wetherill approached the JOSMA about publishing. And they agreed – two full editions worth.
Contributing student John Carradini, MPH, reacts to the importance of these publications when he states, lifestyle medicine is this thing that we know is important – we’re always told to eat our greens and to walk around outside – but we were excited to get this information out to the general public.

He was “excited to see that the Journal of the Oklahoma State Medical Association, so the medical community of Oklahoma, sees that this is so important that we need to be telling all of our doctors about that.”

Victoria Thomas, MPH, contributing student, was also happy to have her work published, especially in an Oklahoma journal. “This was the first time I’d been published in any journal and I was just really happy that it was one from the state of Oklahoma. It was nice to be a part of an overall larger team effort to promote the awareness of lifestyle medicine within this state.”

All the students and Wetherill agree that learning about lifestyle medicine during their training has been beneficial and set them up for future success in their careers in the medical field.

“It’s really important that our physicians know the science behind lifestyle and how it can be used to treat disease… [This] needs to be taught at the foundational years of medical school so that they can be prepared to enter their residency programs and interact with patients in their future careers,” says Wetherill.

Carradini gives the student perspective, “having taken the actual lifestyle medicine course during the public health year, revolutionized how I’m going to counsel my patients. I think equipping myself to be able to actually educate patients where they are will help me find areas where they can begin making improvements that can lead to long-term changes.”

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