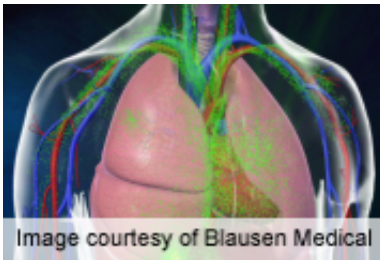


Primary care doctors must influence lifestyle changes

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(HealthDay)—Primary care physicians (PCPs) are increasingly called upon to manage circulatory and circulatory-related diseases among their patients, according to an article published April 10 in *Medical Economics*.

Jeffrey Bendix, a senior editor at *Medical Economics*, notes that of the 10 leading causes of death among Americans in 2011 identified by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, five are related to diseases of the circulatory system: [heart disease](#), chronic lower respiratory diseases, stroke, diabetes, and nephritis/nephritic syndrome/nephrosis. Each of these have known causes that are largely controllable. Smoking, obesity, lack of exercise, and poor diet—also known as lifestyle factors—are contributors to the development and severity of these conditions. PCPs are increasingly being called upon to help their patients make changes to these lifestyle factors.

According to the article, there are some significant ways that PCPs can aid patients in tackling these [lifestyle factors](#). Early prevention is key, so encouraging healthier lifestyles at a younger age can prevent these chronic diseases later in life. PCPs need to discuss weight even in pediatric and adolescent visits. Even if it is uncomfortable to discuss these issues, PCPs must be persistent and help patients identify barriers to improving these habits. Additionally, PCPs should have the patients help in setting attainable, rather than huge, goals. PCPs can also offer medications, in addition to counseling, to tackle associated risk factors, including hypertension and hyperlipidemia.

"We can address obesity, smoking, diet, and [sedentary lifestyle](#), and by so doing, change the course of heart disease," Kathy Magliato, M.D., board president of the American Heart Association-Greater Los Angeles division said, according to the *Medical Economics* article.

More information: [More Information](#)

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