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Concurrent Session 9

**The evaluation of a brief pilot nutrition and exercise intervention for the prevention of weight gain in general practice patients**

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**Background** - The Active Script Program (ASP) is a brief physical activity intervention that is available for use by approximately 1200 General Practitioners (GPs) in Victoria. Twenty-six out of 31 divisions of general practice have reported using the ASP. However, more effective health promotion lifestyle advice could include both nutrition and physical activity recommendations.

**Objective** - To pilot test a brief written prescription (script) recommending lifestyle (nutrition and physical activity) changes delivered by GPs to their patients.

**Design** - The script included five nutrition messages and personalized exercise advice for a healthy lifestyle and/or the prevention of weight gain. GPs volunteered to participate from practices across metropolitan Melbourne. GPs were asked to administer 10 scripts over 4 weeks to 10 adult patients with a body mass index (BMI) of between 23 and 30 kg/m². Information recorded on the script consisted of patients’ weight, height, waist circumference, gender, date of birth, type and frequency of physical activity prescribed, and the nutrition messages selected by the GP. GPs also recorded reasons for administering the script. Interviews recorded GPs views on using the script.

**Outcomes** - Nineteen GPs (63% female) provided a median of nine scripts over four weeks. Scripts were administered to 145 patients (mean age: 54 ± 13.2 years; mean BMI: 31.7 ± 6.3 kg/m²; 57% female), 52% of whom were classified as obese (BMI ≥30 kg/m²). GPs cited ‘weight reduction’ as a reason for writing the script for 78% of patients. All interviewed GPs (90%, n=17) indicated that the messages were clear and simple to deliver.

**Conclusion** - GPs found the ANS provided clear nutrition messages that were simple to deliver. However, GPs administered the script to obese patients for weight loss rather than to prevent weight gain among the target group. This has important implications for future health promotion interventions designed for general practice.