

Workplace Holistic Health & Wellness: Primary care program to address lifestyle disorders

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ABSTRACT

The global upsurge in lifestyle diseases, which account for 74% of global fatalities, poses a critical threat. Life style diseases including cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, are increasingly burdening low and middle income countries. The aim of this article to address integration of primary healthcare with public health strategies, as advocated by the 1978 Alma-Ata Declaration. This approach emphasizes community participation and equitable access to care. Adopting a holistic wellness paradigm—encompassing physical, mental, and spiritual well-being—extends beyond the traditional definitions of health. This integration fosters sustainable, community-centred health systems capable of effectively managing the Life style disease crisis. The study proposes a workplace wellness model, emphasizing its positive impact on individual and organizational productivity. Implementation of this model through sensitization, need assessment, economic productivity in terms of sound health and wellness for organisation. Similar program through Youth upliftment and awareness: journey towards optimism, strength and harmony (YUWA JOSH) among university students aims to improve academic and social performances, creating a healthier youth community. A wellness program, as a primary care strategy, addresses lifestyle diseases by promoting awareness and preventing diseases before complications arise. This approach is crucial as it links early wellness habits to long-term productivity and health resilience.

KEYWORDS

Holistic Health, Life style Diseases, Spiritual Health, Wellness Program

INTRODUCTION

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including CVDs, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes and cancer account for 74% of global deaths. Alarming, 86% of the 17 million annual premature deaths (under age 70) from NCDs occur in lower middle-income countries. (1)

Only 19 out of 194 countries are on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3.4, which aims for a 30% reduction in premature NCD mortality by 2030. (2)

Rapid urbanization in India has spurred economic growth but has also escalated non-communicable diseases Addressing the global surge in lifestyle-related diseases necessitates an integrated primary

care and public health strategy centred on community engagement. (3,4)

The 1978 Alma-Ata Declaration underscored the importance of comprehensive care, disease prevention, health promotion, intersectoral collaboration, and active community participation as foundational elements for achieving "Health for All".(5)

Wellness is a dynamic, multidimensional state encompassing physical vitality, mental clarity, and spiritual fulfilment. It reflects the mere absence of illness, promoting a balanced, purposeful life through the holistic integration of body, mind, and spirit.(6)

The concept of Primary Health Care (PHC) has, since its inception, described care that is easily accessible

and affordable and which emphasizes individual participation in their own physical, social, and mental health and well-being. (7)

Figure 1 Wellbeing emerged only through wellness



The challenge of today is to measure health rather than define alternative maladies and treatments. Understanding well-being is of great importance since it has numerous aspects and is not a brand-new vocabulary.(8)

Diverse perspectives on wellness have been used throughout various periods. However, in the current environment, when human existence is suffering in unknowable ways, wellness must be defined differently to meet this suffering.(9)

Subjective well-being (SWB) and good mental health are closely related but not identical. It encompasses both cognitive evaluations (like life satisfaction) and affective experiences (such as mood and emotions). (11)

The concept of wellness has deep historical roots, originating from ancient civilizations such as India(Ayurveda- emphasizing a holistic approach to health through diet, lifestyle, and spiritual practices) (12)

Well-being encompasses positive emotions, purposeful living, personal growth, autonomy, and meaningful relationships, fostering a balanced and fulfilling life. This holistic wellness integrates emotional, psychological, and social dimensions, promoting resilience and coping mechanisms for both internal and external.(10). Well-being is a byproduct of wellness, which helps people deal with life's everyday challenges.

The Roots of Wellness in Ancient India

The concept of wellness has deep historical roots, originating from ancient civilizations such as India, China, Greece, and Rome. Ancient Indian practices, including Ayurveda, emphasized a holistic approach to health through diet, lifestyle, and spiritual practices. This ancient wisdom highly valued health and vitality through yoga and Ayurveda. Ancient prophets proclaimed, "Shareeramadyam khalu

dharma-sadhanam"—the body is the foundation for all pursuits. Health, or *Swasthya*, is central to life's challenges, with a sound body being essential for spirituality. The ultimate aim was holistic well-being—physical, internal, spiritual, material, and social—to enjoy a long life. Sushruta's works (600 BC), Charaka (300 BC), and Vagbhata (700 AD) are important contributors to this tradition.(13)

Yoga and meditation, created and practiced in India, uniquely emphasize internal well-being. Sadly, many modern illnesses, especially cardiovascular ones, stem from stress, poor diet, and pressure, yet internal health and stress management are often ignored or stigmatized. Mental health was always significant, from Atharva Vedic Ayurveda to Rig Vedic yogic practices, but it is now often overlooked in modern India, even though it is not a foreign idea.(9)

Many modern illnesses, especially cardiovascular ones, stem from stress, poor diet, and pressure. Despite this, internal health and stress management are often ignored or stigmatized. Overcoming this stigma is vital to promote mindfulness. Mental health was always significant, from Atharva Vedic Ayurveda to Rig Vedic yogic practices (9). Sadly, it is now overlooked in modern India, though it's neither a trend nor a foreign idea (9).

Abroad, many South Asians know the phrase "Khush raho" (stay happy), a casual yet meaningful blessing from elders. During the pandemic, it gained new depth. Meditation, often accompanied by burning incense like sandalwood or lotus, evokes calmness and nostalgic memories of loved ones (14).

Global Scope of the Problem

According to the WHO, almost 70% of all deaths globally in 2019 or 41 million people were caused by non-infectious illnesses like diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. This includes 15 million people aged 30 to 69 who pass away prematurely. More than 85% of these unforeseen deaths occur in LMICs. Five main risk factors—risky alcohol abuse, tobacco use, physical inactivity, poor diets, and air pollution have contributed to the growth of these disorders. Mental health problems, which may start developing at a young age, are also a significant concern, with half of all internal illnesses starting before the age of 14, but the majority of cases go unnoticed and unreported.(15)

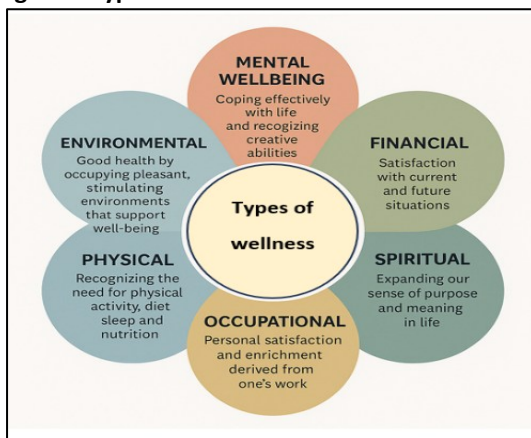
Seven of the top ten global causes of mortality in 2019 were not infectious diseases. These seven factors account for 80% of the top 10 causes of death and 44% of all deaths. Yet, 74% of fatalities worldwide in 2019 were accounted for by all non-infectious illnesses combined. (16)

The top 10 causes of death that are most prevalent in lower-middle-income countries are five noninfectious, four transmissible, and one injury. The number of deaths from diabetes has nearly doubled since 2000 and is now the ninth biggest cause of death in this income category, moving up from fifteenth place. (17)

Wellness: A Key Tool for Comprehensive Health

Wellness begins with maintaining both physical and mental health, which are closely interconnected—challenges in one area often impact the other. Improving physical health can elevate mental well-being, and vice versa. Adopting wellness as a continuous, mindful, and holistic journey empowers individuals to make positive choices that enhance overall quality of life and support balance across essential areas of daily living.(19)

Figure 2 Type of wellness



Different Dimensions of Wellness:

Physical Wellness: This dimension involves recognizing the need for physical activity, diet, sleep, and nutrition. The pandemic highlighted how stress can manifest physically, causing fatigue, sleep disturbances, headaches, and muscle aches. Self-care for physical wellness includes exploring new physical activities, incorporating meditation, gentle stretches, and discussing strategies with family and friends. Research indicates that strong social connections are linked to higher levels of physical activity and better health outcomes.(25)

Self- Care for Physical Wellness

Discussing physical wellness strategies with family and friends can provide fresh perspectives and motivate you to adopt new practices. Social support plays a crucial role in maintaining physical activity levels and overall health. Research indicates that individuals with strong social connections are more likely to engage in regular physical activity and experience better health outcomes.(20)

Spiritual Wellness: Spiritual health is essential for realizing one's potential, finding inner fulfillment,

and understanding life's meaning and purpose. It enables individuals to effectively navigate daily challenges and involves self-evolution, self-actualization, and transcendence. Self-care for spiritual wellness emphasizes active engagement in worldly affairs while maintaining detachment to cultivate universal affection, compassion, and equability.(21)

Self-care for spiritual wellness

Spirituality emphasizes active engagement in worldly affairs while maintaining detachment, aiming to cultivate universal affection, compassion, and equability. This approach seeks to replace negative emotions such as resentment, distrust, ego, and abhorrence, thereby enabling individuals to fully utilize their abilities and transcend limitations. This transformative process involves evolving from "Becoming" to "Being," and ultimately expanding "Beyond," to attain the highest level of health. (22)

Social Wellness: This dimension is crucial, especially during times of change like quarantine, as isolation and frustration can be profound. Self-care for social wellness involves engaging in meaningful conversations with trusted individuals, practicing gratitude, and setting boundaries around technology use. Strong social connections are associated with improved mental and physical health outcomes, including lower risks of depression and anxiety.(26)

Self-care for Social Wellness:

Engaging in meaningful conversations with trusted individuals can enhance emotional well-being. Practicing gratitude, initiating social interactions, and setting boundaries around technology use are effective strategies to foster connection. Regularly assessing whether one seeks advice or simply needs someone to listen can guide appropriate social engagement. These practices support mental health by promoting a sense of belonging and reducing feelings of isolation. Research indicates that strong social connections are associated with improved mental and physical health outcomes, including lower risks of depression and anxiety, better immune function, and increased longevity.(20)

Occupational Wellness: This refers to identifying and pursuing specific job-related satisfaction and enrichment in one's life. Self-care for occupational wellness includes setting clear boundaries around work, choosing a workspace with natural light, and prioritizing health by taking time off when ill.(27)

Occupational wellness through self-care

Establish clear boundaries around work-related difficulties to aid in their exploration of other facets of life. Choose an alternative workspace that is next to a window with natural light. Get an explanation

of the COVID-19 workplace safety precautions and state your needs for safety. Most importantly, if you're able to take time off due to illness, put your health first.(20)

Intellectual Wellness: This includes literacy development, mental and creative conditioning, skill growth, and sharing knowledge with others. A lack of intellectual stimulation can interfere with the brain's ability to produce neurotransmitters that promote happiness. Self-care includes exploring new areas of interest, studying with someone from a different major, and considering new possibilities in your future profession.(20)

Self-care for intellectual wellness

This includes exploring an area of interest that you haven't had time to do before in your free time. Study with someone who is pursuing a different major, and you can both "talk it out" with them. Think about what else you might do in your area of interest or future profession.(20)

Environmental Wellness: Our environmental health is defined by the people, places, and ideas that surround us daily. Staying in touch with extended family, friends, teachers, and mentors is important. For introverts, it is crucial to advocate for alone time to reconnect and recharge. Going outside promotes the production of endorphins and vitamin D, which are vital for sustaining both internal and external health.(20)

Maintaining Yourself for Environmental Wellbeing

Stay in touch with the members of your extended family, friends, teachers, and mentors. Be willing to talk to the folks you live with about how essential time and space are to you for comfort. It's crucial to advocate for your alone time if you're an introvert since it will help you reconnect and recharge throughout the day. Also, going outside promotes the production of endorphins and vitamin D, both of which are vital for sustaining both internal and external health.(20)

High well-being positively influences health, career, family, and finances. Individuals with elevated subjective well-being (SWB) exhibit improved physical health, enhanced work productivity, stronger family relationships, and better financial stability. This interconnectedness underscores the importance of fostering well-being for overall life satisfaction.(28)

A preliminary step: Health innovation through a scalable model for holistic wellness from tertiary to corporate integration

Many studies have shown that the capacity to manage routine stress and hassles at the workplace, which amounts to using one's full potential, ensures individual well-being and good health, resulting in the best performance at the workplace. Healthy employees experience a higher

quality of life, improved productivity, and a reduced risk of illness or injury. Organizations are expanding wellness initiatives to include recognition, paid leave, leadership development, and volunteer opportunities to enhance employee well-being and workplace engagement. (20)

A research-based model has been created and being implemented among the corporate communities, office workplace to deal with holistic wellness & productive performance through the social outreach cell of AIIMS Rishikesh. Similar initiative among university youth and school going students has been also created in form of "YUWA JOSH"(Youth Upliftment and awareness : Journey towards optimism, Strength and Harmony) youth wellness program in order to make life style intervention to ensure their physical, mental and social wellbeing. This early life skills intervention amounts to reduce their future risk of developing life style disorder. Promoting Youth wellness among students can significantly improve their academic and social performances, leading to a healthier and more resilient youth community. The implementation of this model in these settings helps instil the belief that wellness is a way of life, not just a goal, which is essential for fostering a healthier future workforce and society. (23)

The Workplace Holistic Health & Wellness Programme

The Workplace Holistic Health & Wellness Programme a unique initiative of social outreach of AIIMS Rishikesh focuses on the screening and assessment of NCDs such as diabetes, hypertension, stroke and heart diseases, alongside mental health evaluations among employees of corporates or any working areas communities. Emphasis is placed on early diagnosis, prevention at current state of disease , timely comprehensive management , and appropriate referrals for chronic or severe conditions.(24)

The program includes structured wellness initiatives for stress management, sleep health, smoking cessation, alcohol dependency, and substance abuse. It also covers essential life skills such as time and financial management, leadership development, and chronic disease self-care. Interpersonal relationships, marital conflict resolution, workplace conflict, and anger management are addressed through counselling and support sessions. Lifestyle management practices, including workplace yoga, meditation, physical activity, ergonomic solutions, and nutritional well-being, are actively promoted. Human resource strategies are integrated to support a culture of well-being and sustained employee performance. (Figure 3)

Figure 3 Workplace Holistic Health & Wellness Program

The program is an “Interventional research project” conducted in three phases in the form of workshops at various workplaces. These workshops are also developed to assess the psychological disorders of the targeted audience through a comprehensive questionnaire derived from DAS24 (verified and validated by WHO). All biochemical blood samples as recommended in STEP 3 questionnaire (Hb1AC, FBS, PP, LIPID Profile) would also be taken from all participants for early screening of NCDs and timely interventions.

Phase 1: Physical Health and Wellness

Activities (Input): Physical health screening (diabetes, hypertension, stroke, cancer, cardiovascular disease), obesity management, smoking/alcohol cessation, nutrition management, workplace yoga/exercise, and workplace meditation.

Outputs: Reduction in the number of diseased persons and absenteeism, a reduction in the number of employees seeking medical leave, increased effective and sound working hours, and increased work productivity. (Figure 4)

Phase 2: Mental and Social Health

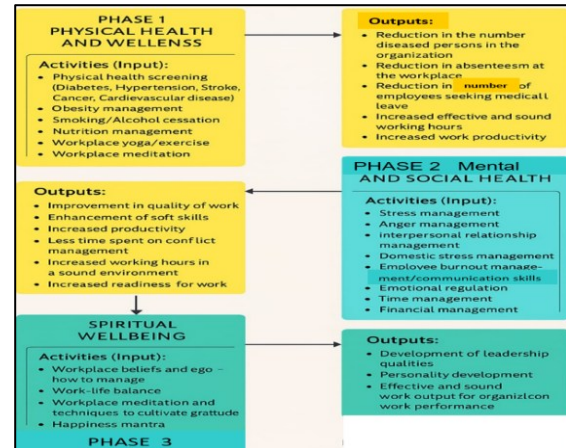
Activities (Input): Stress management, anger management, interpersonal relationship management, domestic stress management, employee burnout management/communication skills, emotional regulation, time management, and financial management.

Outputs: Development of leadership qualities, personality development, effective and sound work output, and increased readiness for work.

Phase 3: Spiritual Wellbeing

Activities (Input): Workplace beliefs and ego management, work-life balance, workplace meditation and techniques to cultivate gratitude, and a happiness mantra.

Outputs: Improvement in quality of work, enhancement of soft skills, increased productivity, less time spent on conflict management, and increased working hours in a sound environment.

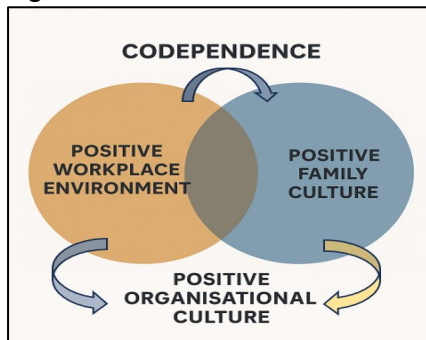
Figure 4 Intervention Model for Workplace Holistic health and wellness program

As depicted in the model, Figure 4 the anticipated outcomes for students and employees include improved performance and creativity through a healthy and supportive working environment. Early disease detection will protect against the seriousness and difficulties of severe illness, improving both individual and organizational wellness. Frequent wellness sessions to lower stress, depression, anxiety, and interpersonal conflict will lower employee work stress and result in more effective work productivity. This program, incorporating workplace yoga, physical activity, ergonomics, evidence-based lifestyle management, and workshops for crisis and time management, is designed to lower the incidence of illness among students and employees.

This model is currently in its pilot phase, and further in-depth studies are necessary to evaluate its long-term impact and applicability across diverse workplace settings. Continued research will help strengthen the model's validity and effectiveness. This initiative represents a sincere effort to inspire future generations to embrace the understanding that wellness is a continuous, integral way of life, not merely a goal to achieve.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the global rise in lifestyle diseases, contributing to 74% of global fatalities, underscores the urgency for comprehensive action. Despite insufficient progress in controlling NCDs, especially in low and middle income nations like India, a holistic approach to public health and primary care is crucial. Wellness, extending beyond the absence of disease, embraces ancient Indian wisdom and incorporates physical, spiritual, mental, environmental, social, occupational and intellectual well-being. Mental health, often stigmatized, gains prominence when navigating contemporary stressors.

Figure 5 Positive family dynamics to Positive organisational culture

Our proposed workplace wellness model, in its pilot phase, integrates yoga, lifestyle management and psychological training to enhance academic and social performance. Workplace wellness serves as a foundational step in fostering a positive environment, promoting healthy family dynamics and interpersonal relationships. (Figure 5) This, in turn, supports the development of a cohesive and positive organizational culture.

The co-dependence between individual well-being and workplace harmony enhances employee engagement, collaboration, and overall organizational effectiveness. As we take small steps towards a healthier world, wellness emerges as a pivotal tool for comprehensive health, fostering vibrancy and resilience in the face of modern challenges.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

All authors have contributed equally.

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