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Letter to the Editor

How culture and context shape lifestyle medicine: insights from the EYFDM Bridge Project

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Dear Editor,

This study originated from our experience in the Bridge Project conducted by the European Young Family Doctors' Movement (EYFDM). As part of the Lifestyle Medicine Group, the project explored how cultural and environmental contexts influence approaches to lifestyle medicine through collaboration among young family physicians from different countries. Our findings were presented at the WONCA World 2025 Preconference.

In the project we joined to strengthen international collaboration, the Lifestyle Medicine Group consisted of three physicians from Türkiye. What initially seemed to be a limitation turned into an advantage, as working in different regions and institutions allowed us to observe that lifestyle recommendations are influenced not only by individual factors but also by social and cultural contexts. his realization defined our project focus and inspired us to explore how young family physicians across Europe integrate cultural aspects into lifestyle counseling. An online survey shared through EYFDM channels included five family physicians from Türkiye, France, Greece, Slovakia, and Luxembourg. Each responded to six case scenarios representing diverse age groups, social backgrounds, and clinical situations. Across countries, lifestyle modification was viewed as a natural part of clinical care. In Greece, seaside walks encouraged both physical activity and social connection. In France, family meals, sophrology and breathing exercises reflected an integrated approach to stress management. In Türkiye, visiting local markets and preparing meals together were described as enhancing nutrition, movement, and family cohesion. Slovak participants emphasized "going to the forest to pick mushrooms" as a holistic practice combining exercise, nature, and diet. In Luxembourg, pregnancy support groups and family cooking activities were valued for strengthening social belonging and promoting healthy habits.

A recurring theme was that "like medication doses, lifestyle prescriptions should be delivered step by step." This approach frames behavior change as an ongoing process supported by regular follow-

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up. Transtheoretical Model, gradual and tailored steps enhance engagement and sustainability.[1]

Another notable insight concerned technology's role in reducing loneliness among older adults. Safe and purposeful digital inclusion can maintain social connections, support cognition, and improve healthcare access, enhancing both knowledge and psychosocial well-being.[2,3]

The study further revealed barriers to implementing lifestyle medicine in daily practice. Many physicians were willing to prescribe lifestyle interventions but faced limited access to community resources. Ensuring that walking groups, exercise areas, education programs, and counseling services near primary care centers remain accessible and up to date is therefore essential. The results highlight the importance of tailoring micro prescriptions to each individual's living environment. Setting one attainable goal, planning small measurable steps, and maintaining social support through regular follow up emerge as key factors for sustaining behavior change. Lifestyle medicine integrates with social relationships, cultural context, and daily life. Family physicians who know their patients' stories, families, and environments play a central role in guiding this trust based and gradual process through a holistic biopsychosocial approach.

Through this project, we discovered how sharing experiences across cultures can transform the way we understand and practice care. We sincerely thank the EYFDM team for fostering this inspiring platform that connects and empowers young family physicians worldwide.

Ethical approval

This study has been approved by the İzmir City Hospital Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee (approval date August 13, 2025, number 2025/342). Electronic informed consent was obtained from all participants before they completed the online survey.

Author contribution

The authors declare contribution to the paper as follows: Study conception and design: YA; draft manuscript preparation: YA, SK, MG, İZ. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the article.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest to disclose.

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