



GPs play a key role in community type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease prevention.

Every day almost 280 people develop diabetes¹, every 12 minutes someone dies of cardiovascular disease², and one in every six people is likely to suffer a stroke³.

The statistics about type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke in Australia are alarming and preventing these serious conditions has never been more important.

As GPs are typically the first point of contact for people seeking health care, they are in a prime position to assess patients for type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease risk, and to promote the prevention message to at-risk patients. However, time constraints can make it difficult for GPs to impart healthy lifestyle information to patients in a meaningful way. GPs can feel confident in referring at-risk patients to the *Life!* program – their patients will benefit from an evidence-based lifestyle modification program that is facilitated by dietitians, exercise physiologists and other health professionals. In addition, GPs also receive updates on their patient's progress.

The *Life!* program is a type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease prevention program and is the biggest prevention program of its type in Australia. Coordinated by Diabetes Victoria and funded by the Victorian Government, the program supports people to reduce their risk of these chronic diseases. Delivered as a Group Course or a Telephone Health Coaching service by certified health professionals, participants learn more about nutrition and physical activity, goal setting, sleep, stress and managing lapses.

Learn more about the Life! Case-Finding Agreement - a financial incentive for general practices to assess and refer eligible patients to the Life! program.

For more information visit www.lifeprogram.org.au/ for-health-professionals or contact casefinding@diabetesvic.org.au

Mount Martha Village Clinic Case Study

Mount Martha Village Clinic (MMVC) services the Mornington region. With approximately 20 GPs working from their Mount Martha and Mornington clinics, MMVC has a wide-ranging client base that includes younger families and an older population. MMVC came on board as a *Life!* program Case-Finding clinic in 2014. They have referred 99 patients to date and continue to refer high risk patients.

With type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease prevention being an important part of their practice work, MMVC felt the *Life!* program was an excellent service to offer their patients.

MMVC Nurse Coordinator Elaine says: "When the *Life!* program first came out a number of years ago, we thought it would be a good service to offer our patients. We do have a number of patients at high risk and the *Life!* program is a free-for-most program that helps reduce the onset of chronic disease. Also, a number of staff had done the program with the local *Life!* provider, so we had an idea of what was involved."

Life! staff provided critical support to MMVC, both in forming effective relationships with the practice and then in the provision of continuous support by, for example, responding to their requests for information and resources.

MMVC's GPs, nurses and receptionists are on board with promoting the type 2 diabetes risk assessment (AUSDRISK tool) and they find the *Life!* program fits well within their practice. *Life!* provides resources, including brochures and posters, which MMVC displays in the waiting room to encourage waiting patients to learn more about diabetes and cardiovascular disease prevention and to do the AUSDRISK test.

Elaine says, "We try to identify issues nice and early. The AUSDRISK test is a great tool to identify risk and to open up discussions with patients about smoking, diet, exercise and waist measurements. It's a good way to get the patients thinking about how to take their score down."

"We like to encourage high-risk patients to consider *Life!* as part of their health management. The program is a great way for patients to look at their diet and exercise and to have support in how they can improve these. We get some good feedback from patients, and doctors are very happy to refer to the program, so I think it's a worthwhile service."

"I find the *Life!* program is fantastic for my high-risk patients. It gives them structured support and teaches them practical skills (e.g. visits to the supermarket to learn how to read food labels to enable them to choose healthier foods). I'd say that most of the patients who attend the program tell me how much they've enjoyed it and got something useful from the program – even the ones who were initially sceptical. Focusing early on preventing diabetes makes so much sense than dealing with diabetes once it's established." – Dr Marich, Mount Martha Village Clinic