



Position Statement On

DISEASE REVERSAL

The Lifestyle Medicine Institute (LMI) states that the Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP) is “designed to prevent, arrest and reverse chronic disease processes.” This position paper discusses the use of the term “reverse”.

Key messages

- *Reversal as used by the LMI refers to the change of direction of these disease processes.*
- *Reversal can also mean that biomarkers improve so much that the previously diagnosed condition may no longer be diagnosable.*

Disease reversal

It is well recognized that wholefood, plant-based diets are associated with increased longevity and lower rates of chronic disease, including obesity, heart disease, diabetes and some forms of cancer. There is also mounting evidence to suggest that health is largely determined by lifestyle choices (1) and that some chronic diseases can be arrested and even reversed by implementing lifestyle changes (2,3).

What does reversal mean? As lifestyle diseases tend to develop over an extended period of time, and worsen as time goes by, reversal as used by the LMI refers to the change of direction of these disease processes. For example, diabetes follows a disease process that commonly involves steady worsening of biomedical indices, including a worsening of blood sugar level control, worsening HgbA1C levels, an increase in amount and distribution of body fat, an increase in BMI, a progressive loss of neurological function, etc. (4). Terminology used to describe these worsening states includes insulin resistance, prediabetes and diabetes, where insulin resistance increases the risk of developing prediabetes and diabetes, and where prediabetes often leads to full blown diabetes. Each term describes a specific condition and is defined by biomedical indices and level of functioning. Similarly, a number of studies have shown reversal of coronary heart disease through lifestyle intervention (2,3). Risk factors such as total and LDL cholesterol decreased, and there was significant regression of atherosclerotic plaques.

In this context, reversal means reversing this trend, which can include reducing weight, improving blood glucose control, improving neurological function, reducing atherosclerotic plaques, etc. As these signs and symptoms improve, the need for medications may also be reduced (4).

Reversal can also mean that biomarkers improve so much that the previously diagnosed condition may no longer be diagnosable. A number of studies have shown that a low-fat whole-plant based diet was able to reduce weight, improve biomedical indices and reduce the need for medication in the majority of cases, in a matter of weeks (5-8). This does not necessarily mean that the individual is cured of the disease. However, if the newly adopted and healthful lifestyle is able to be maintained, the individual should be able to live a symptom free life with biomarkers controlled within normal ranges.

References

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