

Integrating lifestyle factors into aesthetic practice

BY SAM ROBSON

The COVID-19 pandemic will long be remembered as the most significant global disaster of recent times. As its effects have been observed and investigated there has been an increased focus and attention drawn to lifestyle and how this can impact on one's health.

From becoming aware that people suffering from obesity had higher rates of morbidity and mortality when infected with COVID-19 [1,2], it also became apparent that one of the direct consequences of lockdown was to create an obesogenic environment. The term 'covebesity' [3] encapsulates this well – limited access to gyms and recreational activities, comfort eating either due to boredom, stress, or both, reduced accountability to colleagues, family and friends about food choices through being relatively isolated, a boom in online availability of takeaway food that can be delivered at home with just a few clicks – all factors creating the perfect storm for gaining weight and the 'Corona-stone' was the accepted consequence.

Skin too has not escaped unscathed from the wrath of the pandemic – a surge in problem skin, particularly acne, has been a distressing repercussion. Many lifestyle factors could be blamed for this – poor diet [4] featuring refined carbohydrates and fast food (with easy access to this as mentioned above), less sunlight exposure due to staying at / working from home and having to wear masks. The snowball effect of combining these with the overall general increase in the stress experienced by an individual coping with the uncertainty and fear caused by the pandemic is almost guaranteed to cause acne breakouts in susceptible individuals [5].

Having observed the impact of these particular lifestyle factors, it was interesting to note that other issues such as sleep, exercise and relationships can also play a significant exacerbating role. Reflecting on the whole concept of how modifiable lifestyle factors can impact on health motivated me to study for the Diploma in Lifestyle Medicine (Dip BSLM/ IBLM). Since



graduating in late 2020 I have progressively been introducing more lifestyle factors into the assessment and management of my day-to-day aesthetic practice. I shall outline some of these below with reference to the weight loss and skin services provided at Temple.

My weight-loss programme, Temple Vie [6], is broadly based on many lifestyle medicine pillars and is an effective intensive lifestyle intervention. With its focus on exercise, nutrition and positive psychology it aims to provide the tools and resources to enable 'Weight loss for Life'. Studying for the Diploma has reinforced these principles as well as highlighting the importance of other lifestyle factors such as sleep and positive relationships. In providing an effective weight loss and lifestyle management programme it has proved essential to be cognisant of not just the theory but also how to be able to practically engage and support people in making a lifestyle change.

As well as evaluating an individual's dieting and exercise history, current state of health and barriers to change, it is also important to establish (and help to address) if there is a dysfunctional relationship with food. It is only when an individual has a comprehensive understanding of their challenges and how to manage them that any sustainable weight loss can be achieved.

Our problem skin clinic really took off when the clinic gained Acne and Rosacea Association UK (ARAUK) accreditation. Studying for this provided the Temple skin team with greater knowledge on how to successfully manage these conditions. Paying attention to the importance of sleep, stress management, diet and exercise can certainly augment the effects of good skincare and treatments; associations between the gut microbiome and skin are well established but rarely considered as part of a comprehensive skin programme.

We have found that incorporating lifestyle factors into the assessment and management of any problem skin has improved the quality of our care – this is reflected in the results achieved by our patients and this comprehensive focus has been welcomed and embraced by them.

Providing a holistic approach such as this to my aesthetic practice has greatly enhanced the culture within the clinic, the whole team having engaged with many of the principles encapsulated by lifestyle medicine. This has not only proved to be satisfying and rewarding for practitioners and patients alike but has also benefited the health and wellbeing of all the staff. The positive feedback expressed by patients on receiving this personalised and inclusive outlook has also encouraged them to engage

in other services offered at the clinic. If my own experience is anything to go by then I thoroughly recommend integrating lifestyle factors into your aesthetic practice.

References

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