

The tools you need to prevent disease

By Health and Life

Health care in the United States historically has been focused on treating the symptoms of sickness. The scientific accomplishments in this area are truly astonishing, but despite these advances, the American population as a whole isn't healthier. In fact, chronic diseases are on the rise.



Greg Bergner

To combat this in our own community, Barton Health will soon be offering the Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP), a national program proven to improve health and wellness. CHIP is designed to help people reduce their risk for disease through better health habits and lifestyle changes. *Health and Life* spoke with Gregory Bergner, Barton Health medical director of lifestyle and wellness, to learn more about this program and who it can help.

Health and Life: *Why is it so important to focus on chronic diseases?*

Bergner: Chronic diseases rob us of function, reduce our quality of life, and usually result in premature death. Examples include heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. These chronic diseases are now responsible for more than 75 percent of health care costs. And physical diseases

aren't the only conditions keeping us from reaching our full potential. Mental conditions such as stress, depression, or lacking a sense of purpose in life also take their toll.

Health and Life: *So how do we reverse this sobering trend?*

Bergner: There is hope in dealing with these health conditions. What many people don't realize is that these diseases are preventable, or can be slowed—and even reversed—with simple, inexpensive changes in our lifestyles. Mounting scientific evidence backs this up.

Health and Life: *How is Barton Health working to improve the health of our own population?*

Bergner: Promoting wellness in our community is the foundation of the new Barton Center for Orthopedics & Wellness. We're excited to be offering innovative wellness programs based on four pillars of good health: Nutrition, Exercise, Stress Management, and Having a Sense of Purpose in Life. We're combining conventional medicine with evidence-based alternative therapies to support a "whole-person approach" to better health.

CHIP is one example of how we're doing this. This nationally recognized program focuses on those four pillars. It's an intensive educational program with 18 sessions running over three months. Participants are guided through the stages of lifestyle change. They learn how to make positive changes—such as exercising more often—and then learn to maintain them. The group setting provides support to help people stick with their new health habits and build accountability. The goal is to lower cholesterol, reduce hypertension and blood sugar levels, and reduce excess weight.