

Capsule Commentary on Zhang et al., Combined healthy lifestyle behaviors and disability-free survival: the Ohsaki Cohort 2006 Study



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J Gen Intern Med 34(9):1850
DOI: 10.1007/s11606-019-05144-x
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This prospective cohort study by Zhang et al.¹ examined the impact of healthy lifestyle (HL) behaviors on disability-free survival among elderly patients (aged > 65 years) in Oshaki City, Northeast Japan. A survey examining multiple lifestyle behaviors like smoking, exercise, fruit intake, and sleep habits was obtained at baseline during a two-week window after which participants were followed up for 10 years. The result was an increase in disability-free survival by 17.1 months in those who adhered to 3 HL behaviors compared with those who adhered to only 0 or 1 behaviors. The study used the LTCI, a mandatory form of national social insurance in Japan. Age or the presence of chronic conditions did not seem to play a role in the effectiveness of HL behaviors as both late elderly (≥ 75 years) and elderly patients having chronic conditions showed similar benefits from HL behaviors.

However, documentation of HL behaviors was only obtained at baseline but not during the 10-year follow-up; thus, it is unclear if these behaviors were consistent throughout the study period. Previous studies have alluded to the fact that HL behaviors were associated with increased survival² and a reduction in all-cause mortality risk³ but none had been done on disability-free survival.¹ To move the field forward, new researchers should carry out similar prospective cohort studies where HL behaviors are measured at baseline and monitored throughout the follow-up period. In addition, new HL behaviors should be examined to determine how they affect survival and mortality risk.

For clinicians, this study provides a strong reference for patient education on the benefit of a healthy lifestyle in the elderly. Other populations should be studied and additional HL behaviors like a low salt diet⁴ and reduced alcohol consumption⁵ explored.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards:

Conflict of Interest: The author declares that she does not have a conflict of interest.

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