

Advanced Marriage Life Support (AMLS)

There is an increasing amount of research showing the tremendous impact marriage and divorce have on health. Overall, married men and women clearly live longer, live healthier, have less mental health problems, are less likely to commit suicide and make more money. Kids raised in intact marriages where mom and dad are working together to raise them also live healthier, have less mental health problems, are less likely to commit suicide, are more likely to go on to college and have higher paying jobs. Check out www.smartmarriages.com and www.camarriage.com for a lot more information on this research.

Doctors promote healthy living to patients and encourage them to eat healthier, exercise more, and smoke less. It is more challenging for health professionals to factor in the impact of marriage and family issues on health. Doctors can be on the front lines in the battle to strengthen marriages. We see people long before most couples would ever go to a counselor or a pastor - before the problems develop. We can provide information via books, online resources, mentoring couples, counseling referrals or conferences that help couples have stronger marriages and avoid divorce. Physicians would much rather prevent a heart attack than treat one. Why not help strengthen marriages rather than deal with the tremendous repercussions of a failed marriage?

We are initiating an effort called **Advanced Marriage Life Support** at residency programs and other settings to increase the focus on family in family practice training. This name comes from another course called ACLS (Advanced Cardiac Life Support) that teaches doctors how to deal with heart attacks and other life threatening emergencies. The initial focus of AMLS will be family practice but we hope to expand to pediatrics, internal medicine, psychiatry and OB/GYN doctors. All primary care doctors should be better trained to help marriages. Nurses and other office staff can play key role in helping marriages just like they often do in other areas of health education.

We offer a seminar on marriage and divorce and the relationship to health. This seminar will teach residents as well as others how they can help their patients recognize and deal with family issues that can impact health.

We utilize an effective tool called a **Couple Checkup**. (www.couplecheckup.com). This is an online over-the-counter version of a more in-depth marriage assessment tool that has been in use for many years and is highly researched. In 30 minutes for each person, couples get a computer generated assessment of key areas of their relationship. They have access to a 15 lesson marriage online workshop where they can immediately start working to build a better marriage. There is a version available for married, engaged or dating couples to help people at earlier stages of their relationship to know what goes into healthy marriages. We will encourage doctors to recommend this evaluation during annual physicals but also be aware of other opportunities to encourage healthy marriages during routine visits.

We are developing a web site that will contain information and resources doctors can use to help patients improve their marriages. We will exchange ideas on what is working and not working in this area. We will do research projects to determine how we can be most effective.

AMLS has tremendous potential for helping many couples get the help they need to prepare for marriage or to stay happily married. AMLS will help doctors improve their own marriages. Write me at geelm@cotse.net with any ideas you have and contact information about health professionals you know who might want to be part of this effort.

Thanks in advance.

Advanced Marriage Life Support

Dr. Larry Gee

AMLS



Couple Checkup Conference

Prescription Strength



Couple Checkup

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