

## Dorothy Cohen Serna, MD, CWP, FACP



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**ACLM Member Since 2014**

Dr. Serna has been in private practice since 1998. She founded North Cypress Internal Medicine and Wellness, with the mission of providing superior, attentive and thoughtful care with a strong focus on Lifestyle Medicine and Wellness. Dr. Serna is certified as a Diplomate of the American Board of Lifestyle Medicine and is a Certified Wellness Practitioner as well as Certified Health and Wellness Coach.

Dr. Serna attended medical school at the University of South Florida and completed her Internal Medicine residency at Baylor College of Medicine in the Texas Medical Center in 1997. She is Board Certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine and attained Fellowship with the American College of Physicians. Dr. Serna serves as Chief Wellness Officer at North Cypress Medical Center Hospital and has served on the Go Healthy Houston Task Force.

*Internal Medicine and Lifestyle Medicine Physician*

*Practice Owner*

<http://drserna.com/north-cypress-wellness/>

### **What motivated you to practice Lifestyle as Medicine?**

The tenets of Lifestyle Medicine have always been an integral part of the vision for my practice, and along with wellness coaching, created a unique environment to offer personalized, outstanding care. The impact on my patients was remarkable - many were doing and feeling better than they had in years, with significantly less medication needed. Guiding patients along their individual roads to wellness and teaching them to embrace mindfulness has truly been life changing for me as well, bringing passion and real joy back to my practice of medicine.

### **What type of lifestyle services do you provide?**

We provide Health & Wellness coaching, including weight management, stress management, fitness assessment and motivational guidance to support a healthy lifestyle. Every patient in my concierge practice receives four complimentary Wellness Coaching sessions upon enrolling as a member. I am also educated in and able to teach plant-based nutrition, having completed the Culinary Rx course as well as through my own personal transition and journey to whole- food, plant-based eating.

Underlying all visits for medical issues is a lifestyle medicine approach. Patients know and appreciate that if a medication is absolutely needed, it will be prescribed, but if there's a way to manage the condition with a healthier lifestyle, we'll always opt for that approach first.

### **When are services offered and by what type of provider?**

I provide primary care services directly to my patients and am the "hub" for all the wellness services provided in my clinic as well as a guide to coordinated care with other providers and specialists as required. We have a dedicated team, all trained extensively to serve as Health and Wellness coaches, including: a physician assistant certified in Lifestyle Medicine, a nurse practitioner, a third wellness coach who also provides lifestyle medicine outreach, the director of our chronic care management program, and me. All of us provide ongoing support to help patients achieve their health and fitness goals and to improve their well-being.

### **What kind of assessments/ test / tools etc. do you utilize in your practice?**

A 90 minute Comprehensive Annual Health Assessment lays the groundwork for developing an individualized Wellness Plan for each patient. This includes a thorough history and physical examination, an in-depth wellness questionnaire and an appropriate array of screening tests (such as metabolic panels, lipid profiles, inflammation markers, blood counts, diabetes and thyroid screens and coordination of cancer screenings such as colonoscopy, mammogram, etc.) based on age, health status and risk factors.

### **Where is your practice located?**

Cypress, TX 77429 USA (Houston area, Texas)

### **What is your patient demographic?**

40% are over 65 years old; 35% between 45-64 years; 25% under 45 years.

**What reimbursement model (s) do you offer?**

Fee for Service model. Membership.

In 2017 I transformed my practice to a membership model in order to provide the kind of highly personalized care at the heart of Lifestyle Medicine. The smaller practice size allows me to devote more time to each patient's individual needs, and includes a host of valuable benefits and amenities, including same- or next-day appointments, longer office visits and direct availability to me 24/7 via a patient-dedicated cell phone and email.

**How are your services provided?**

All appointments are 1:1, as is Wellness Coaching, providing patients with an experience tailored to their individual needs. In addition, I provide an ongoing series of complimentary seminars on a variety of health and wellness topics (healthy eating, exercise, stress management, making connections), some exclusively for my patients and their family members and friends, and others for community members, held at our local hospital, North Cypress Medical Center. We have also provided group lifestyle medicine visits in our clinic, with a strong coaching focus.

**What advice do you have for other physicians and allied health professionals who are dedicated to a lifestyle medicine-first approach to healthcare?**

First, and always, realize that this approach takes time, and needs to be woven seamlessly into every aspect of your practice. The strength of a long-standing, intimate physician-patient relationship has never been more vital, or more threatened in today's rushed, often transactional healthcare environment. Commit fully to this patient-focused, holistic approach and you will be blessed with a panel of deeply loyal patients who understand and appreciate the unique care experience you are providing. It's the way every physician wants to practice, and the way every patient wants to be treated.

Second, make sure the passion for lifestyle medicine starts with you and your own personal care. Serve as an exemplary role model for the lifestyle you are promoting. There's nothing more powerful to patients than knowing how deeply you embrace and believe in the Lifestyle as Medicine approach

**What changes are you seeing right now in healthcare/medicine that makes you most hopeful?**

I've been privileged to witness the lifestyle in medicine approach grow from fringe movement to mainstream in less than a decade. It is now readily accepted that self care and lifestyle changes are of paramount importance in our own health and that of our patients. For instance, even as of 2013, there were few employee wellness initiatives in place at my community hospital, but my proposal for ongoing education was readily accepted, and I have since presented a series of well-received programs for physicians and staff on preventing burnout, as well as on lifestyle medicine, wellness and healthy eating. In addition, I enjoy being part of the plant-based movement, making the shift personally and incorporating the principles into patient care. In my own practice, it's deeply gratifying to see the tenets of lifestyle medicine adopted with alacrity across all generations, from Baby Boomers who want to safeguard their quality of life as they age, to Millennials who are invested in their long-term wellness. All feel empowered by the opportunity lifestyle medicine provides to take charge of their own health.

There's no question that the concept of lifestyle medicine will continue to gain believers as evidence mounts on its many benefits. The emphasis on lifestyle approaches to reducing high blood pressure in the recently revised ACC/AHA Hypertension Guidelines, and consideration of plant-based eating as a preferred alternative in the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans, are but two strong signals of acceptance by more traditional entities. I believe there is much more to come.