

CFAHR Evidence Brief

Experiences of people with cancer who have participated in a hospital-based exercise program

Authors and Affiliations

Alessia Ferri¹, **Elise Gane**^{1,2,3}, Michelle Smith¹, Elizabeth Pinkham², Sjaan Gomersall^{1,4}, Venerina Johnston¹

¹ School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, The University of Queensland

² Princess Alexandra Hospital, Metro South Hospital and Health Service

³ Centre for Functioning and Health Research, Metro South Hospital and Health Service

⁴ School of Human Movement and Nutrition Sciences, The University of Queensland

Alignment with [Metro South Health Research Strategy 2019 - 2024](#)

- Build research capability
- Increase research capacity
- Embed research in clinical services
- Translate research to better health
- Research excellence

Alignment with [Allied Health Research Capability & Development Strategy 2017 - 2020](#)

- Engage staff as research consumers
- Enable staff as research generators
- Build research-enabling infrastructure and strategic processes
- Strengthen leadership in research and innovation
- Enhance internal research collaboration and synergy
- Strengthen partnerships with consumers and external stakeholders

Alignment with [Allied Health Research Capability & Development Strategy 2017 - 2020](#)

- Standard 1 – Clinical Governance
- Standard 2 – Partnering with consumers
- Standard 3 – Preventing and controlling healthcare-associated infection
- Standard 4 – Medication safety
- Standard 5 – Comprehensive care
- Standard 6 – Communicating for safety
- Standard 7 – Blood management
- Standard 8 – Recognising and responding to acute deterioration

Practice Issue

Cancer is a leading cause of burden of disease in Australia. The side effects of cancer and its treatment cause a number of symptoms and physical impairments which negatively affect an individual's quality of life and physical functioning. Many of the physical and psychological consequences of cancer and its treatment are amenable to change with exercise. Commencing and continuing a physically active lifestyle can be difficult at any stage of life, but particularly after undergoing cancer treatment. Several barriers to participation in exercise among people with cancer have been identified, such as fatigue, ongoing treatment, and a lack of time and other resources. Understanding the key factors affecting exercise participation in this population is necessary to inform strategies to improve adherence and to improve the delivery of exercise interventions

Evidence

The Physiotherapy Department at Princess Alexandra Hospital hosts an outpatient exercise program for people with a history of cancer. People with a cancer diagnosis who did complete (completers, n=11) and did not complete (non-completers, n=4) the 12-session exercise program in 2018 engaged in semi-structured interviews. Topics that were discussed included: reasons for involvement in the exercise program, perceived benefits or challenges to participating, reasons for drop out/adherence, and readiness to implement changes beyond the program.

The major themes reported by participants were:

- Initial motivators for participation: to address reduced physical and mental health
- Benefits to participation: improved well-being and creating a life after cancer
- Facilitators during participation: supportive staff, comradery
- Challenges faced by participants: out of their comfort zone, accessibility
- Barriers beyond the program: concerns for the future, motivation to exercise
- Impact on broader lifestyle behaviours: dietary choices, physical activity

Practice Change

Changes are now being implemented into the delivery of this outpatient exercise class as a result of this project. Education sessions are being developed to compliment the exercise classes. Topics for discussion include managing cancer-related fatigue and self-management strategies to continue to exercise in the community.

Publication/s

This research was presented at the 2019 Australian Physiotherapy Association National Conference. A manuscript is under review at present.

Adapted from Tilley Pain (Townsville HHS)

Based on the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association's Health Policy Evidence Brief

Metro South Health Research Strategy 2019 – 2024 https://gheps.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/2325000/research-strategy.pdf

Allied Health Research Capability & Development Strategy 2017 – 2020 <https://metrosouth.health.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/allied-health-research-strategy.pdf>

National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/sites/default/files/migrated/Overview-of-the-NSQHS-Standards-second-edition.pdf>