

Clifford BK, Mizrahi D, Sandler CX, Barry BK, Simar D, Wakefield CE, Goldstein D. Barriers and facilitators of exercise experienced by survivors: a mixed methods systematic review. Support Care Cancer. 2018;26:685-700.

#### OVERVIEW AND METHODS:

Exercise improves physical function and reduces pain and fatigue in cancer survivors which in turn improves quality of life and feelings of well-being. Exercise has been shown to improve the health and well-being of people who have survived cancer.

This is a systematic review of the literature regarding barriers, facilitators, and preferences for exercise for survivors of cancer.

5 databases were used including Medline, EMBASE, CINAHL, PsycINFO and Scopus. Nineteen studies (Jan 2000 to Feb 2016) were used of which nine were qualitative and ten were quantitative.

#### FINDINGS:

Most common barriers to initiating or maintaining exercise:

1. Persisting treatment related side effects
  - a. Breast Cancer = lymphedema, shoulder stiffness, myalgia and arthralgia
  - b. Colorectal Cancer – diarrhea, colostomy bags
  - c. Prostate - incontinence
2. Lack of time
3. Fatigue
4. Qualitative: “Don’t like to sweat, Not the sporty type”
5. Lack of useful information provided to survivors (patient education) regarding exercises to explain how helpful it is in mitigating the side effects
6. Not knowing what to do, what type of exercise, what intensity that is safe and effective

Most common facilitators:

1. Gaining a feeling of control over their health
2. Managing emotions
3. Mental well-being
4. Social benefits

Preferred method of exercise

1. Walking
  - a. at a moderate intensity
  - b. receiving information face to face
  - c. but with the option to exercise at home supervised or unsupervised

2. Beginning either immediately after completing treatment or 3-6 months after treatment completion

#### LIMITATIONS OF STUDY:

- Didn't address barriers and facilitators in relation to specific aerobic exercise vs resistance ex
- Heterogeneous cancer survivor cohorts ranging from three weeks to six years post completion
- No sub analysis for cancer type or treatment
- Most studies were cohorts of predominantly white, English speaking people with limited socioeconomic deprivation

#### FUTURE RESEARCH:

- Role of motivational interviewing, education and support in overcoming barriers to exercise for cancer survivors
- Feasibility of implementing these strategies in routine patient care.

#### COMMENTS:

There is a plethora of evidence regarding the benefits of exercise to cancer survivors throughout the continuum of care. However, sadly too many survivors are not regularly exercising. This article does a nice job in explaining some of the reasons why. Sharing this information with our PT colleagues and other health care professionals (HCP) on the cancer care team can assist in advocating for the patients and the profession. We all need to do a good job in educating survivors and HCP about the benefits of exercise and helping survivors work through the challenges of side effects from cancer treatment so they can happily exercise in a program that is sustainable for many years to come.

I look forward to the discussion!! What are your thoughts on this article?