

powered by



GERMAN
CANCER RESEARCH CENTER
IN THE HELMHOLTZ ASSOCIATION

Contribution ID: 82

Type: 1 - Scientific Poster

Taking back control' through exercise: a qualitative exploration of treatment-related side effects and physical activity in women during treatment for ovarian cancer

Wednesday 22 July 2026 12:55 (20 minutes)

Introduction: Physical activity during treatment for cancer has been shown to improve function, and reduce treatment-related side effects, but existing evidence is largely derived from early-stage and more common cancers and may not reflect the experiences of women with ovarian cancer. This qualitative study explored side effects associated with chemotherapy and experiences with physical activity across treatment stages among women with ovarian cancer enrolled in an exercise clinical trial.

Methods: Participants were drawn from the phase 3 ECHO trial, which was a 6-month telephone delivered exercise intervention during chemotherapy (exercise versus usual care). Eligible women were newly with diagnosed ovarian cancer, were aged ≥ 18 years, had ECOG score 0–2, and had completed the ECHO trial between June–December 2022. Guided by the socioecological framework, semi-structured interviews were conducted using a phenomenological approach. A pragmatic, inductive thematic analysis was undertaken to develop salient themes using the Braun & Clarke methodology.

Results: Seventy of 489 eligible ECHO participants were invited to participate; 26 returned consent forms, and 15 completed interviews (mean age 61.9 years). Most participants had stage III (53.3%) or stage IV (20%) disease; 53% were in the intervention group. Six themes were constructed: (1) side effects along the cancer continuum; (2) physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion; (3) fears related to uncertainty, long-term impacts, and recurrence; (4) “choosing what I can control”; (5) exercise to navigate side effects and daily living; and (6) participation in an exercise trial as “lifesaving.”

Conclusion: Women experienced significant symptom burden yet used exercise to manage side effects, maintain normality, and regain control, supporting the need for tailored exercise programs across the ovarian cancer treatment continuum.

Keywords

ovarian cancer, survivorship, exercise trial, qualitative research

Conflict of Interest & Ethical Approval

yes

Abstract submitters declaration

yes

Author: PLINSINGA, Melanie (Australian Centre for Precision Health and Technology (PRECISE), Griffith University, Australia)

Co-authors: Ms BAKER, Brooke (Cancer Council Queensland, Queensland, Australia); Dr COLLINS, Katelyn (Cancer Council Queensland, Queensland, Australia); Mrs RYE, Sheree (Cancer Council Queensland, Queensland, Australia); Dr SPENCE, Rosa (Cancer Council Queensland, Queensland, Australia); Prof. HAYES, Sandi (Cancer Council Queensland, Queensland, Australia)

Presenter: PLINSINGA, Melanie (Australian Centre for Precision Health and Technology (PRECISE), Griffith University, Australia)

Session Classification: Poster Session