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Digital Health Resources promoting Physical Activity among People Living with and beyond Cancer: an Environmental Scan

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Background: People living with and beyond cancer experience multiple health challenges. Although physical activity (PA) reduces the most common side effects and successfully improves quality of life, PA levels among this population remain low due to limited support and low self-efficacy. Many survivors seek PA-related information through digital health resources, such as websites, documents, and apps. Online information-seeking behavior has been associated with a greater likelihood of meeting PA guidelines among cancer survivors. Integrating behavior change techniques (BCTs) into digital resources is recommended to enhance PA adoption and maintenance. However, concerns persist regarding the quality, evidence base, and consistency of BCT use in digital resources.

Aims: As part of a broader Environmental Scan examining resources that support PA in cancer survivorship, this study aimed to: i) identify freely accessible digital resources, and ii) evaluate their reliability, accuracy, accessibility, and integration of BCTs.

Methods: Internet searches were conducted in incognito mode to minimize algorithmic bias. Resources were assessed using the eEurope 2002 Quality Criteria, the DISCERN tool, and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Incorporation of BCTs was evaluated using the 40-item CALO-RE taxonomy.

Results: A total of 77 digital resources were identified, including 56 websites, 2 online modules, 1 video library, 1 avatar, 1 app, 15 booklets, 1 template, and 1 training program. Nearly half (48%) met reliability standards, while only 34–36% demonstrated medium to high accuracy. Accessibility violations averaged 25 per resource, with only two resources free of Level A or AA violations. The number of BCTs per resource ranged from 1 to 20 (mean = 9).

Impact: These findings indicate inconsistent quality and highlight the need for more balanced, evidence-based information on benefits and safety precautions. Fostering collaborations between resource developers and research institutions could strengthen resources' credibility and extend their behavioral impact among cancer survivors.

Keywords

Cancer survivorship, physical activity, digital health, behaviour change

Conflict of Interest & Ethical Approval

yes

Abstract submitters declaration

yes

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