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Exercise tailored to patients with rare cancers.

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Background

One in five patients with cancer in the Netherlands has a rare cancer, affecting approximately 20.000 new people per year. However, there is a lack of research on supportive cancer care in this population, resulting in a lack of knowledge on quality of life optimization.

It is unclear if the beneficial effects of exercise in patients with common cancers can be generalized to patients with rare cancers, with different cancer- and treatment related side effects. In this project we evaluate the specific needs and preferences of patients with rare cancers towards exercise and aim to empower physiotherapists in supporting the delivery of exercise in patients with rare cancer.

Methods

This project consists of three phases: (i) conduction of a mixed methods study to capture patients' experiences and exercise preferences, using focus groups, interviews, a survey and comprehensive literature review, (ii) development of a manual for physiotherapists to support delivery of exercise programs tailored to patients with rare cancer, (iii) examine the feasibility of tailored goal-directed exercise programs among 12 patients with various types of rare cancer. Preliminary effectiveness on goal-attainment was evaluated using the Patient Specific Goal-setting method.

Results

Of the survey respondents (n=187), 70% experienced at least some symptoms limiting physical exercise, and 60% reported to exercise less compared to pre-diagnosis. Almost half of the participants received information on exercise and in 21% was referred to a physiotherapist. In phase 3, 12 patients were enrolled. To date, five patients completed the study and among these patients 84% of their goals were achieved. The results of the entire project will be ready to present in July-2026.

Conclusion

If the goal-directed exercise program appear feasible, the manual will be finalized and effectiveness of tailored exercise programs in patients with rare cancer will be further evaluated in a sufficiently powered RCT.

Keywords

Rare cancers
Physiotherapy
Exercise manual
Goal-attainment

Conflict of Interest & Ethical Approval

yes

Abstract submitters declaration

yes

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