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Perceptions and practices of healthcare professionals regarding exercise for people receiving immune checkpoint inhibitor immunotherapy for cancer.

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Background: There are calls for exercise to be integrated into routine cancer care. Healthcare professionals (HCPs) play a key role in promoting exercise. However, data on exercise during immune checkpoint inhibitor (ICI) immunotherapy is lacking, and HCP's views on exercise within this setting are unknown. This study investigated the perceptions and practices of HCPs regarding exercise for people receiving ICIs for cancer.

Methods: An online survey was distributed internationally via professional associations, professional networks, and clinicians. Eligible participants were HCPs involved in the management of people receiving ICIs for cancer. The survey included questions regarding safety and efficacy of exercise during ICI treatment (using agree/disagree scale questions), as well as practices, confidence, and barriers with regard to exercise recommendations and referrals.

Results: A total of 110 HCPs completed the survey, including 28 exercise professionals and 82 non-exercise professionals (predominantly medical oncologists (n=40) and nurses (n=19)). Over 90% of HCPs totally or somewhat agreed that exercise is safe, important, and beneficial for people receiving ICIs, including to reduce treatment-related side-effects and maintain or improve physical and mental wellbeing. Further, 67% of HCPs totally or somewhat agreed that exercise can enhance ICI effectiveness. While 55% of HCPs totally or somewhat disagreed that exercise can increase the frequency or severity of immune-related adverse events (irAEs), 35% were undecided or did not know. On average, non-exercise HCPs reported recommending exercise to 62% of their patients and referring 36% of their patients to an exercise specialist.

Conclusion: Although evidence from human trials is scarce, our data suggests that HCPs believe exercise is beneficial for people receiving ICIs for cancer, with two-thirds believing it may also enhance treatment efficacy. HCPs also believe exercise is safe, although some were uncertain about the effects on irAEs. Additional insights into practices, barriers and confidence regarding exercise promotion will be presented at the conference.

Keywords

exercise, immune checkpoint inhibitor immunotherapy, healthcare professional, survey

Conflict of Interest & Ethical Approval

yes

Abstract submitters declaration

yes

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