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Reducing Symptom Burden Through Physical Exercise in Melanoma Patients Under Immunotherapy or Targeted Therapy: the RESPECT Trial –First Insights Into an Ongoing Trial

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Background: Despite survival gains with immune checkpoint and targeted therapies, toxicities and adverse effects—particularly fatigue—impair quality of life in melanoma patients. Although exercise benefits are established in oncology, its integration in melanoma care is underexplored. RESPECT examines whether a supervised hybrid (online/in-person) exercise program reduces fatigue and improves quality of life, cognition, and physical function during adjuvant immunotherapy or targeted therapy.

Methods: The RESPECT trial is a single-center randomized controlled trial at the West German Cancer Center (N=104), allocating patients 1:1 to a 12-week supervised hybrid exercise program vs standard care. The intervention includes online group sessions (2/week), in-person visits (3 during intervention period), and app-guided home training (1/week); each 60-minute session combines aerobic, resistance, and coordination exercises with cognitive elements. Assessments at baseline, post-intervention, and 6-week follow-up include fatigue (FACIT-F), melanoma-specific quality of life (FACT-M), physical activity (BSA questionnaire), physical function (5RM; VO2peak), cognition (MoCA), body composition (BIA), and circulating metabolites/cytokines; EHRs capture treatment exposure and clinical events.

Discussion: To date, n=6 patients have been enrolled (median age 60 years; range 42–73). Based on evidence in other cancers, we hypothesize that regular exercise will reduce fatigue in melanoma. Integrating metabolite and cytokine profiling with patient-reported, cognitive, and performance outcomes will elucidate immunometabolic pathways by which exercise may influence treatment efficacy and toxicity. The patient-centered, digitally supported design addresses varying health, toxicities, digital literacy, and travel distance; individualized prescriptions, app-supported home sessions, and close team contact aim to optimize adherence and safety. Interim feasibility data of approximately 25 patients can be presented at the conference.

Conclusion: If efficacious, this pragmatic model could underpin routine implementation of structured exercise in adjuvant melanoma care.

Disclosure Statement: All authors declare no competing interests.

Keywords

Exercise, Melanoma, Quality of Life

Conflict of Interest & Ethical Approval

yes

Abstract submitters declaration

yes

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