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Exercise preferences and barriers in cancer survivors: A cross-sectional study

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INTRODUCTION: Limited number of cancer survivors meet the recommended physical activity guidelines, regardless of the clear benefits, due to mental and physical constraints of a cancer diagnosis and treatment. Further, research is required to better understand the preferences and perceived barriers of cancer survivors and how different factors influence their participation in exercise programmes.

METHODS: This cross-sectional survey used an anonymous online questionnaire (Qualtrics) consisting of 35 questions concerning 5 domains on: participants background, physical activity levels, exercise preferences, cancer site and treatments and exercise barriers. Participants were recruited through charitable and exercise organizations in the UK. Data analysed using SPSS 29.0 (IBM SPSS).

RESULTS: Sixty-four cancer survivors (56 females; 8 males) participated in the study, most patients affected by colorectal (n=40, 62.5%) and breast (n=13, 20.3%) cancers, while 28% were on active treatment. Participation in activities with strenuous, moderate and mild intensities all reported reduced after a cancer diagnosis. Low confidence was the most frequent exercise barrier reported (32.8%), followed by time constraints (31.3%), low motivation (29.7%), lack of knowledge (23.4%), while access to facilities (6.3%) was the least reported factor. Most patients (57.8%) were willing to partake in an exercise programme that involved supervision (45.3%), in group (30.8%) or at home (30.8%), three sessions/week (35.9%) and at moderate intensities (67.2%). The preferred mode of exercise instruction was face-to-face (50%).

CONCLUSION: Factors such as low confidence and lack of cancer specific exercise education may have a negative influence on cancer survivors' exercise participation and adherence. Decreased physical activity post diagnosis may have significant impact on quality of life and cancer recurrence. Further research is required to better understand cancer survivors' physical activity preferences/constraints to better inform contemporary multimodal and individualized interventions.

Keywords

physical activity; barriers; preferences; cancer survivors

Conflict of Interest & Ethical Approval

yes

Abstract submitters declaration

yes

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