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Assessing the Reach of Exercise Therapy Care Pathways in German Comprehensive Cancer Centers

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Background: The MOVE-ONKO Project aims to design and evaluate a comprehensive care pathway for cancer patients in need of exercise therapy. The goal is to develop, implement, and sustain a structured care pathway to gain cancer patient access into exercise therapy options.

Methods: This two-phase exploratory study used a mixed-methods design. Evaluation of the comprehensive exercise therapy care pathways was guided by the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research and the RE-AIM framework. Reach was defined as the number of patients accessing cancer centres, enrolling in the exercise therapy pathway, and receiving referrals to exercise programmes. Semi-structured interviews with healthcare professionals contextualised care settings, while surveys of key informants collected organisational data on patient flow relevant to the reach dimension.

Results: In 2022, the average patient flow was 5,315 (\pm 2,721.9) cancer patients receiving medical care. Of these, 118.4 (\pm 91.8) received exercise counselling, and 88.3 (\pm 79.5) were referred to oncology exercise interventions. In 2023, the average patient flow increased to 6,836.4 (\pm 2,971.0) patients, with 168.3 (\pm 136.6) receiving exercise counselling and 111.4 (\pm 76.2) referred to exercise interventions. Breast cancer was the most common diagnosis in both years. In 2024, MOVE-ONKO was implemented. At baseline, 353 patients were enrolled, of whom 36.3% had breast cancer and 8.1% lung cancer; other diagnoses each accounted for less than 5%. Overall, an increase in average patient flow was observed over the two years. Qualitative findings indicate that younger and female patients show greater openness towards supportive care and well-being and are therefore more likely to seek exercise counselling independently.

Conclusion: With considerable individual effort, a small number of motivated patients can currently be reached. Without adequate funding and governmental support, equitable and comprehensive patient access to exercise therapy will remain uncertain. Thus, the uptake of a structured care path is needed.

Keywords

Exercise therapy, Reach, Oncology, Networks

Conflict of Interest & Ethical Approval

yes

Abstract submitters declaration

yes

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