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“I know it will make me feel better”: A qualitative study on physical activity in people with melanoma receiving immunotherapy

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Purpose: The benefits of physical activity for patients undergoing cancer treatment are well established. However, experiences of physical activity and desired supports among those with melanoma receiving immunotherapy are not well understood. This study explored: a) the types and levels of physical activity engaged in during immunotherapy; b) the factors influencing physical activity behaviour; and, c) preferences and desires for physical activity support.

Methods: Participants were recruited from a 12-month longitudinal study capturing physical activity and patient-reported outcomes during immunotherapy. Following four planned immunotherapy cycles, patients receiving immunotherapy as either an adjuvant therapy or in the treatment of unresectable tumours or metastatic melanoma participated in a semi-structured interview exploring physical activity guidance, behaviours, perceptions, and desired supports. Interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically. The derived themes were mapped to the COM-B model (Capability, Opportunity, Motivation –Behaviour).

Results: Fifteen participants were interviewed (median age 61-years, 60% male). Four major themes were identified: physical activity knowledge, physical activity guidance and support, physical activity trajectory across treatment, and physical activity drivers and discouragers. Engagement in physical activity and changes made due to immunotherapy were varied among participants. Whilst most remained active throughout immunotherapy, participation was often hindered by limitations in knowledge and opportunities for support with physical activity.

Conclusions: Interventions focused on enhanced education, integrated support pathways, and behaviourally informed strategies may effectively promote physical activity engagement.

Implications for Cancer Survivors: Due to the complexities of both treatment and behaviour change, patients receiving immunotherapy for melanoma may benefit from individualised physical activity guidance.

Keywords

Melanoma; Immunotherapy; Physical Activity; Behaviour Change;

Conflict of Interest & Ethical Approval

yes

Abstract submitters declaration

yes

Authors: YEE, Jasmine (Sydney School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia. Psycho-Oncology Cooperative Research Group, School of Psychology, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia); HEATH, Charlotte (Sydney School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia); LONG AO, Georgina (Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia. Charles Perkins Centre, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia. Melanoma Institute Australia, The University of Sydney, Wollstonecraft, NSW, Australia. Royal North Shore and Mater Hospitals, Sydney, NSW, Australia); LIU, Jia (Jenny) (The Kinghorn Cancer Centre, St Vincent's Hospital Sydney, Darlinghurst, NSW, Australia. St Vincent's Clinical School, University of NSW, Darlinghurst, NSW, Australia); MENZIES, Alexander (Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia. Charles Perkins Centre, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia. Melanoma Institute Australia, The University of Sydney, Wollstonecraft, NSW, Australia. Royal North Shore and Mater Hospitals, Sydney, NSW, Australia); EDWARDS, Kate (Sydney School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia. Charles Perkins Centre, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia); MARVIN, Sarah (Sydney School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia. Charles Perkins Centre, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia.)

Presenters: YEE, Jasmine (Sydney School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia. Psycho-Oncology Cooperative Research Group, School of Psychology, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia); EDWARDS, Kate (Sydney School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia. Charles Perkins Centre, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia); MARVIN, Sarah (Sydney School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia. Charles Perkins Centre, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW, Australia.)

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