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EXERTION-mC: A protocol for EXERcise during chemoTherapy infusION to improve outcomes for people with metastatic Colon cancer

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Background

Despite strong evidence supporting exercise in cancer care, uptake into routine practice remains low. Exercise during chemotherapy infusion (intra-infusion) offers a novel strategy to address this gap. Exercise could enhance treatment efficacy by acutely increasing tumour blood flow, potentially enhancing drug delivery when performed simultaneously with chemotherapy infusion. Intra-infusion exercise also leverages time when patients are otherwise sedentary and confined to the treatment suite, overcoming common barriers such as time and access. Supervised exercise during infusion could also reduce fear and build confidence for exercise beyond treatment.

Aim

The primary aim is to evaluate the effect of an intra-infusion exercise program on tumour depth of response (tumour shrinkage) in people with metastatic colorectal cancer. Secondary aims will explore progression-free survival, hospitalisations, adherence to chemotherapy, symptom burden, HRQoL, self-efficacy, physical activity, body composition and adverse events.

Methods

This multi-centre randomised controlled trial will recruit people (n=197) receiving chemotherapy for metastatic colorectal cancer. Adults planned to receive chemotherapy for 6 months will be randomised to exercise or usual care. During each chemotherapy session, the exercise group will complete moderate-intensity aerobic exercise for 20 minutes during infusion. All participants will receive one session with an Exercise Physiologist for general advice and information on available exercise services.

Significance

This study has the potential to redefine supportive care for people undergoing chemotherapy by improving both clinical outcomes and symptom management, reinforcing exercise as an adjuvant to medical treatment. By challenging traditional exercise models, it could lead to a fundamental shift in hospital-based exercise services and inform future care recommendations. Findings will have broad applicability to other cancer types and infusion-based treatments, laying the foundation for large-scale, multi-centre trials to further explore the efficacy of intra-infusion exercise and its potential impact on cancer treatment dosages.

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Keywords

exercise, chemotherapy, infusion, tumour size

Conflict of Interest & Ethical Approval

yes

Abstract submitters declaration

yes

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