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Contribution ID: 354

Type: 1 - Scientific Poster

From Optional to Essential: Embedding Exercise Medicine into Routine Cancer Care in a Real-World Setting

Thursday 23 July 2026 12:40 (20 minutes)

Background:

Exercise is one of the most evidence-based interventions in cancer care, shown to improve treatment tolerance, physical function, symptom burden and quality of life across the cancer continuum. Despite strong international guidelines, exercise remains inconsistently integrated into routine oncology care, with many services struggling to translate evidence into sustainable clinical practice.

Aim:

To describe the implementation of an integrated Exercise Medicine model embedded within a supportive oncology day-hospital setting, and to present real-world outcomes demonstrating feasibility, safety and acceptability.

Methods:

Drawing on eight years of real-world, Lift Cancer Care Services developed and embedded a multidisciplinary Model of Care that positions Exercise Medicine as a core therapeutic intervention alongside medical and supportive cancer treatments. The model integrates exercise physiology and physiotherapy within a governance-led framework, incorporating standardised assessment, risk stratification, oncology referral pathways and ongoing clinical monitoring. The service supports people across tumour streams and treatment phases, including active treatment and survivorship.

Results:

Over eight years of sustained implementation, the model has supported a large cohort of people living with and beyond cancer, with high engagement and strong clinician referral uptake. Exercise interventions have been delivered safely within routine care, with no serious adverse events reported. Service data indicate high adherence to prescribed exercise programs and positive patient-reported experiences. The model has demonstrated operational feasibility, sustainability and adaptability within a real-world clinical environment.

Conclusion:

This implementation demonstrates that Exercise Medicine can be embedded as essential, routine cancer care rather than an optional adjunct. The Lift Model of Care provides a practical, scalable framework informed by sustained real-world delivery, supporting health services to translate exercise oncology evidence into standard clinical practice.

Keywords

Implementation, Models of Care, Routine Care, Exercise as medical treatment

Conflict of Interest & Ethical Approval

yes

Abstract submitters declaration

yes

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Session Classification: Poster Session