



Interplay of strategies for surviving cancer: Physiotherapy, Massage, Walking, Ballet, Swimming and Psychotherapy

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Objective and Literature

Objective: This case study discusses how the interplay between diverse strategies of physical and emotional rehabilitation impacted the treatment of a patient with breast cancer.

Literature: According to current literature on breast cancer survivors, dance – ballet in particular (Boing et al, 2017; Karkou et al, 2021; Letton et al, 2020; Macdonald, 2022; Mirandola, 2015), aquatic exercises (Muñoz-Gómez et al, 2022), psychotherapy (Deshpande, 2026), and massage therapy (Mansilla et al, 2025) all can help in diverse ways the physical and emotional health of these patients' quality of life.

Research Question

How the interplay between diverse strategies of physical and emotional rehabilitation impacted the treatment of a patient with breast cancer?

Contextualisation

Contextualisation: Diagnosed with breast cancer during the pandemic of COVID-19, professional ballet dancer and professor with 43 years old had a mastectomy with reconstruction, followed by hormonal treatment (Tamoxifen). Patient had family breast cancer history (mother twice-35y/75y; cousins, greatgrandmother, cousin and grandmother's sister).

Before diagnosis patient was a high performance athlete doing professional ballet performances, swimming, walks and gym.

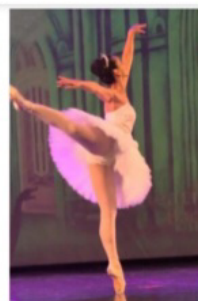
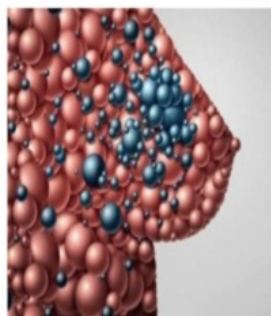


Figure 1. Patient performing after breast cancer mastectomy

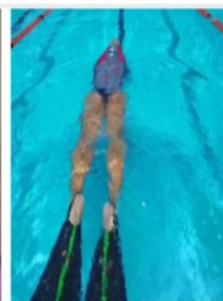


Figure 2. Patient swimming with less mobility after the mastectomy



Figure 3. Patient teaching ballet after mastectomy and pectoral major muscle resection

Discussion and Final Considerations

Final considerations:

Psychotherapy, medical support and family care were crucial until today to face the emotional trauma of the mastectomy and breast cancer treatment.

Limitations in strength, flexibility and pain continues in July 2026. The patient's ability to dance ballet resumed to 3x, swim 3x, teach ballet 2x, rehearse 3-5x a week, and three ballet performances per year.

Implications from this case to other patients with cancer:

Emotional support through psychotherapy, medical team and family care were crucial to give hope and inner strength for the patient to practise sensorial experiments with textures, movements through physiotherapy, ballet, swimming, walks, breathing exercises, massage therapy, laser therapy and meditation. Although pain on the mastectomy side continues, the variety of rehabilitation strategies are mostly used until today (5 years later) contributing to the patient's rehabilitation of the upper body and well being to work as professional ballet dancer, professor of ballet and live as cancer survivor. This ballet dancer's case serves as inspiration to patients and medical teams due to the interplay of physical and emotional strategies and braveness to face the disease, stimulating the person's wellbeing to live after cancer.

Future directions

We suggest further research on breast cancer and cancer patients to discuss the impact of the interplay of mixed physical and psychological strategies for rehabilitation and treatment considering a holistic view of the patient and their quality of life.

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