Exercise and the Breast Cancer Survivor: The Role of the Nurse Practitioner

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Background: Patients with cancer are living longer with their disease and have improved survival rates because of early detection and more effective cancer treatments. Lifestyle modification and exercise improve clinical outcomes in breast cancer survivors.

Objectives: Exercise is important implications for the survivor and should be integrated into the aftercare trajectory of survivorship.

Methods: A literature review of articles published from 2002–2014 was conducted using the key words cancer survivor, survivorship, breast cancer, collaboration, and exercise. PubMed, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, and CINAHL® databases were searched.

Findings: Nurse practitioners can build an environment to motivate patients to exercise, empowering them to be active participants in their own survivorship care. Collaboration is necessary to ensure that healthy lifestyle choices, including exercise, are being discussed and implemented in survivorship care plans to help optimize patient outcomes.

Background

Nurse practitioners (NPs) are key figures in the coordination and collaboration of cancer survivorship care. They can bridge the gap and ensure coordination of care between cancer specialists and primary care providers (PCPs) to ensure quality care once active treatment is completed. Survivors often encounter changes in physical activity along with anxiety and depression, fear of cancer recurrence, and increased risk for chronic conditions (Cooper, Loeb, & Smith, 2010; de Moor et al., 2013; Ellsworth, Valente, Shriber, Bittman, & Ellsworth, 2012). Lifestyle modifications and exercise can improve clinical outcomes in the breast cancer survivor, and NPs are integral to build environments motivating patients to exercise and supporting them in their choice of exercise. This article examines the background of cancer survivorship, exercise and its importance in breast cancer, and the coordination and collaboration of breast cancer survivors through survivorship care plans (SCPs).