The Interdisciplinary Rehabilitation Care Team and the Role of Physical Therapy in Survivor Exercise

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Background: Rehabilitation professionals offer expertise in functional assessment, treatment of impairments and functional limitations, and disability prevention. To optimize recovery, and often prior to participating in community-based exercise programming, survivors may need rehabilitation services from a range of healthcare professionals, including physiatrists, nurses, nutritionists, psychologists, and speech, occupational, and physical therapists.

Objectives: Survivors with physical impairments and functional limitations may benefit from interdisciplinary rehabilitation and physical therapy, including tailored therapeutic exercise interventions.

Methods: A literature review was conducted using the key words cancer survivor, cancer rehabilitation, impairment, fatigue, lymphedema, chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy, and exercise. MEDLINE®, EMBASE, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, and CINAHL® databases were searched.

Findings: Nurses play a critical role in identifying survivors whose function or fitness is compromised to the point where participation in community-based exercise programming would be inappropriate or unsafe. The interdisciplinary rehabilitation care team can help facilitate the survivor’s transition to community-based exercise programming.