



Factors perceived to influence exercise adherence in women with breast cancer participating in an exercise program during adjuvant chemotherapy

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Background

- Regular physical activity (PA) during breast cancer treatment might have several positive outcomes, including less of a decline in overall quality of life (McNeely *et al.* 2006, Mishra *et al.* 2012).
- Women with breast cancer may experience a decrease in physical activity following the cancer diagnosis, and adhering to exercise interventions can be a challenge (Husebø *et al.*, 2014).
- Chemotherapy is of the most important factors for decreased PA during breast cancer treatment (Kwan *et al.* 2012).
- Treatment-related barriers to physical activity might account for more than 50% of reduced exercise participation in breast cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy (Courneya *et al.*, 2008₁).

Aim



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To explore factors influencing exercise adherence among early stage breast cancer patients, while following a home-based exercise program during chemotherapy.

Methods

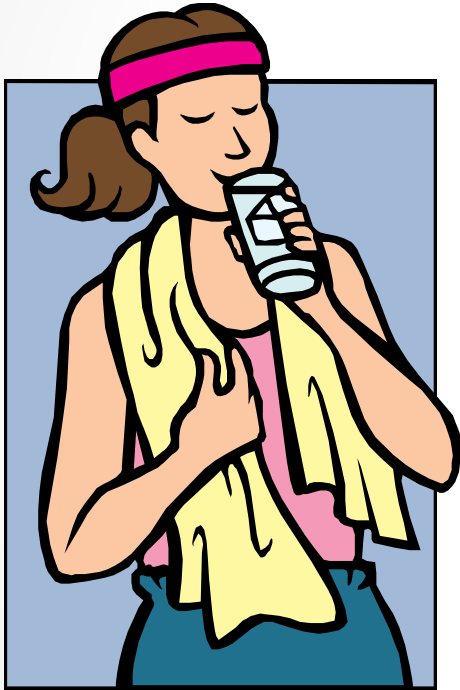
- A qualitative design using 5 focus group interviews explored patient's perceptions of challenges to exercise adherence during a randomized, controlled trial (Husebø *et al.*, 2014).
- 27 women were sampled from their participation in the RCT exercise intervention group.
- To systemize and analyze data we used the software program NVivo 10 (QSR International 2012) and Systematic Text Condensation (Malterud, 2012)

Characteristics of the participants

- The mean age of the sample was 52.
- 81 % were living with a partner
- 43 % had children living at home
- 46 % had an university degree
- 49 % were currently employed.
- 64 % had had a lumpectomy.
- 46 % had received an adjuvant chemotherapy treatment containing taxane monotherapy.
- 89 % had been physical active at a moderate PA level for >6 months pre-intervention.
- The women exercised for a mean of 19 weeks, and sustained a moderate PA level during treatment.



Main results



- 5 main themes:
 - Side-effects of breast cancer treatment as a barrier to exercise
 - Other valued activities compete with exercise
 - Restoring and maintaining normality in daily life motivates physical activity
 - Constructive support enhances exercise
 - Positive beliefs about efficacy and outcomes motivate exercise

Barriers to exercise

The tiredness...lying on the couch feeling like I was in a coma. I should have been out walking, but I just stayed on the couch.

I stopped going to the gym when I got cancer. I was afraid it (missing a breast) would show in the neckline, and my head got really heated from wearing the wig during exercise.

I have to say that I used to trust my body. When I went walking in the mountains I knew how much it could take. Well...I don't trust it anymore.

After receiving the last treatment I felt like hitting rock bottom. And it was Christmas, so I decided on preparing for the Holidays instead of doing my strength exercises.

Motivation to exercise

Guidance, support and advice from the nurse was really helpful. I needed to be pushed a little.

I thought that if I didn't do it (exercised) my body would quickly deteriorate. Because, when I saw what the poison did to my body....If I hadn't done something for myself, it would have been even worse.

It was one of the most positive things in my life at the time, and one of the really important activities I had planned for each day. I put the I-pod on, put on my boots and walked! I was not just a person with cancer, but someone who exercised.

I felt I had done something big; when I went for walks feeling lousy. Even though it was just around the corner. I felt I had done something good for myself, even after walking for just 10 or 15 minutes.

Conclusions and practical implications

- Treatment side-effects act as an imperative barrier to influence exercise adherence.
- Balancing between investment in exercise and other valued activities affect exercise adherence.
- Exercise participation propose distraction from worries.
- Social support is crucial to breast cancer patients health behavior change.
- Health professionals should support the patients on how to succeed with safe exercise during breast cancer treatment.
- Exercise programs should be individually adjusted for experienced detrimental side-effects of the employed chemotherapy, and for the function exercise has for the patient.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!



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