

Review Article

The Effect of Exercise in Surviving Patients with Breast Cancer: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Introduction: Physical activity has been recognized as an important intervention for improving the quality of life of women with breast cancer.

Objective: We sought to summarize the available evidence on the effects of exercise in surviving patients with breast cancer.

Material - Method: We searched articles on the topic in the databases Cochrane, MEDLINE, EMBASE, CINAHL, PsychINFO, CANCERLIT, Pedro and SportDiscus, as well as in conference proceedings, in clinical practice guidelines and other unpublished sources. In the study are included only randomized controlled trials evaluating a) exercise interventions for surviving patients with breast cancer and b) how exercise affects the quality of life, cardiorespiratory fitness or physical functioning.

Results: Out of the 136 studies identified, only 14 met all the inclusion criteria. Despite significant heterogeneity and relatively small samples of studies, the point estimates on the benefits of exercise for all outcomes were positive even when statistical significance was not reached. Exercise resulted in statistically significant improvement in the quality of life of survivors of breast cancer, was evaluated after the general - functional assessment cancer therapy (weighted mean difference [WMD] 4.58, 95% confidence interval [CI] 0.35 - 8.80) and the functional Assessment of treatment of breast cancer (WMD 6.62, 95% CI 0.21 - 12.03) as the exercise led to significant improvements in physical function and maximal oxygen consumption and reduce symptoms of fatigue.

Conclusions: Exercise is an effective intervention for improving quality of life; it helps cardiorespiratory endurance in physical function and fatigue survivors in patients with breast cancer. Among women living in Western countries, breast cancer is an important disease in terms of incidence and mortality.

Key words: exercise, quality of life, cardiorespiratory fitness, physical functioning