



Media Release

Exercise effective for bone cancer patients

Melbourne: New research to be presented today (2/12) at a leading cancer conference shows that specially-tailored exercise programs can improve quality of life, strength, fitness and muscle mass of patients with bone cancer, contrary to current recommendations.

The findings being presented at the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia's (COSA's) Annual Scientific Meeting shows that traditional recommendations for cancer patients with bone metastases to avoid physical activity may not be the most effective. Instead, resistance training and aerobic exercise programs designed to avoid loading potentially fragile sites of bone metastases, are both safe and effective for patients.

The study, conducted by the Health and Wellness Institute at Edith Cowan University examined the effects of a highly tailored exercise program on breast and prostate cancer patients with bone metastases. The programs avoided the more fragile skeletal sites while maintaining training stimulus to other areas of the body.

One of the investigators, Professor of Exercise Science at Edith Cowan University, Robert Newton said current practice saw patients with bone metastases avoid high intensity aerobic, resistance training or impacts, citing bone fragility, possibility of exacerbating the disease, or inability of patients with advanced cancer to benefit. However, extensive research into various patient populations had established that a rest strategy hastened decline and reduced survival.

Professor Newton said patients who completed the exercise intervention showed significant improvements in neuromuscular strength (11%), aerobic fitness (5%), walking speed (12%), physical activity (24%) and muscle mass (3%) without any increase in bone pain or adverse events.

"The findings clearly show that patients with bone metastatic cancer can benefit from a targeted program, provided it is closely monitored by an exercise physiologist and tailored to their medical and physical requirements," he said.

"What we're moving towards now is exercise medicine. A patient is diagnosed, their key issues are determined, then we prescribe the exercise so that they're internally producing a medicine to improve their chances of surviving the cancer."

COSA President, Associate Professor Sandro Porceddu, said the findings could prove promising for the future treatment of cancer patients with bone metastases.

"We've long encouraged cancer patients to remain active and exercise, but have always made an exception when it came to bone metastatic cancer. It's encouraging to see that appropriate exercise is safe and effective for a population traditionally instructed to be sedentary. With results demonstrating improved quality of life and no adverse events, this study holds the potential to create great change and progress within the oncology community."

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