

MEDIA RELEASE

Exercise prescription for all cancer patients

Leading health organisations endorse a dramatic change to how we treat cancer

Exercise should be prescribed to all cancer patients as a standard part of their cancer care to help counteract the effects of cancer and its treatment, according to a new ground-breaking position statement released today.

The Clinical Oncology Society of Australia position statement on “*Exercise in Cancer Care*” was officially launched today and highlighted in an article published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

It is the first position statement worldwide to call for exercise to be an essential component of cancer treatment and has been endorsed by Cancer Council Australia, the Medical Oncology Group of Australia, Exercise and Sports Science Australia and Australian Physiotherapy Association, and supported by over 20 cancer and exercise organisations.

The position statement calls for changes in the way cancer is treated, specifically for exercise to be prescribed as part of routine cancer care. It calls on all health professionals treating cancer patients to:

- Discuss exercise as a part of their cancer treatment plan
- Prescribe exercise to all people with cancer
- Refer patients to an exercise physiologist and/or physiotherapist with experience in cancer care

Australian Catholic University’s Professor Prue Cormie, Chair of the COSA Exercise and Cancer Care Group and lead author of the statement, said that the evidence to support the recommendation that every person diagnosed with cancer should be prescribed exercise medicine in addition to their other cancer treatments was now overwhelming.

“Evidence suggests that withholding exercise from people with cancer is harmful,” Associate Professor Cormie said.

“Based on what the science tells us, exercise is the best medicine people with cancer can take, in addition to their cancer treatments, to reverse treatment related side-effects, slow the progression of their cancer, increase quality of life and improve the chances of survival.

“If we could turn the benefits of exercise into a pill it would be demanded by patients, prescribed by every cancer specialist and subsidised by government – it would be seen as a major breakthrough in cancer treatment. Exercise is a medicine that works alongside mainstream treatment to help those affected by cancer feel better and increases their chances of survival.”

David Speakman, Chief Medical Officer at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre said that the new position statement was a significant step forward in the treatment of cancer.

“The notion that we must protect a patient, wrap them in cotton wool, is old fashioned and not supported by the research. Our attitudes to treating cancer – what it takes to give people their best chance at survival – have to change. All cancer patients will benefit from an exercise prescription.”

Nicole Cooper is 33 and was diagnosed with stage 4 bowel cancer last year. She has experienced first-hand the life-changing effects of incorporating exercise into her cancer treatment plan.

“When I received a terminal cancer diagnosis, I was prescribed two potentially lifesaving cancer treatments: chemotherapy and exercise.

“A year later, I am in remission, having taken just as much exercise as I have chemotherapy,” said Nicole.

The new position statement is available online at <https://www.cosa.org.au/publications/position-statements/>

ENDS

Media contacts: For further details, interviews audio grabs or copies of the embargoed media release please contact the COSA Media Team on (02) 8063 4109 (this number is monitored inside and outside of business hours) or media@cancer.org.au. Alternatively, you can contact Hollie Jenkins on 0400 762 010.

To contact the communications team at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, please contact Danny Rose on 0407 250 088.