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BREAST CANCER

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Exploring the effects of an exercise programme on women with breast cancer

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Background: Emerging evidence suggests that regular exercise plays an important role in improving physical function and quality of life following a breast cancer diagnosis. Evidence also suggests it can reduce the risk of recurrence. Despite these benefits, research has shown that women with breast cancer are known to reduce their activity during treatment and afterwards. More research is required to explore what type of interventions may help these women become more active.

Design & Methods: The breast unit charity, at St Margaret's Hospital, Epping, funded a qualitative study to explore if running exercise classes in the hospital gym would aid or initiate return to exercise. The classes ran weekly, for 6 weeks, led by a fitness instructor, trained to CanRehab level 4 to ensure she had the requisite knowledge and expertise. 8 participants consented to attend these sessions. They were interviewed prior to and after the classes were completed which were audio taped and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy.

Results: The exercise sessions had positive effects on all but one participant who did not enjoy the aerobic element. The main study findings suggested that exercising with women in the same boat, with a specially trained instructor and being informed of the benefits of exercise could help women to become more active.

Conclusion: 56 patients have now attended classes over the last year due to team referrals and continued funding. An on-going service evaluation has highlighted 70% wish these classes continue and now a further class is running in the community.

Biography

Ruth McCrea trained as a RGN at The Royal London Hospital and is the lead Research Nurse in the breast unit at St Margaret's Hospital, Epping, which runs numerous trials in all aspects of breast cancer. She is a Member of one of the trials management groups. She has completed her MSc at The Royal Marsden and St George's University of London and her dissertation involved the setting up and exploring the effects of this exercise programme. Due to the positive outcomes and further funding, these sessions are now being offered to all patients who attend the breast unit.

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