

Abstract

This study examined the frequency of free or subsidized exercise programs for negating cancer-related fatigue in cancer survivors unable to afford other exercise options. A content analysis of resources found in 14 communities within Northern Alberta was performed. Results revealed three types of support: government, community, and charity. The findings are detailed below.

Introduction

One of the main physical side-effects seen in cancer patients is fatigue (Wesley et al., 2013). A growing subsection of cancer research has begun to look at ways to negate such cancer-related fatigue (CRF), specifically through the implementation of exercise programs. In their meta-analysis of 26 different articles, Tian, Lu, Lin and Hu (2016) came to the conclusion that exercising for fifty minutes, two times a week, leads to a significant drop in CRF (p. 981).

Financial Burden

An increase in care costs for individuals occur as they transition from childcare institutes to the adult system (D'Agostino & Edelstein, 2013). On top of this, adolescents, young adults and adults who have survived cancer are all more likely to find themselves unemployed than are their healthy peers (Gupta et al., 2016, p. 1041), and often lack proper education and knowledge in regards to enrolling in the care plans they are eligible for (D'Agostino & Edelstein, 2013, p. 593).

When looking at Northern Alberta, there is no evidence of any systematic attempt to discover the types of exercise and physical activities that people suffering from CRF can make use of, nor the various financial supports that would lift costs normally associated with such activities. The purpose of this present study is to find out exactly this. What free or subsidized exercise options exist for youth and young adults suffering from cancer-related fatigue living within Northern Alberta?

Methods

The sample chosen for this research included fourteen communities found within Northern Alberta: the cities of Fort Saskatchewan, Cold Lake, Grande Prairie, and Fort McMurray (the urban service area of Wood Buffalo), and the towns of Bonnyville, Whitecourt, St. Paul, Grande Cache, Peace River, Edson, Hinton, Slave Lake, High Level and La Crete. Information was gathered from a combination of city or town home webpages, provincial government websites, and charity websites.

Results

Free Government Program

The Alberta Healthy Living Program (AHLP) is a free, government-funded health program exclusively for adults living with a chronic illness. A main component of the AHLP is the Supervised Exercise Program, which provides individuals access to a variety of medical experts and both individual and group-tailored exercise options. It was found in nine of the fourteen communities. These communities were: Grande Prairie, Cold Lake, Bonnyville, Whitecourt, St. Paul, Grande Cache, Peace River, Edson and Hinton. Fort Saskatchewan, Fort McMurray, Slave Lake, High Level and La Crete all lacked access to the AHLP.

Charity Subsidization

Two charities, KidSport and Canadian Tire Jumpstart, were found to contribute directly to youth engaging in sports programs within the researched communities. KidSport was available in all but High Level, La Crete, Hinton, and Edson. Each community fundraises independently, and therefore the number of individuals a community can support depends on the total funds raised within that given community. Research found Canadian Tire Jumpstart to cover a total cost of 200 dollars per individual, and is available to youths between the ages of 4 and 18 whose family unit falls within the low-income cut-off line as defined by Revenue Canada.



Source: www.kidsportcanada.ca



Source: www.jumpstart.canadiantire.ca/en.html

Free or Subsidized Community Support

Six of the fourteen communities showed free exercise options for youth, ranging from once a week to eleven times per week. Four of the fourteen communities had free exercise options for adults, ranging from two to seven times per week. Eight of the communities had no free exercise options. Fort Saskatchewan had by far the most options for both youth and adults at eleven and eight times respectively. La Crete, despite having the second smallest population, offered the second most community-sponsored activities (two for youth, seven for adults). Community-sponsored activities included: drop in centres for youth, badminton, pickleball, soccer, basketball, youth gym time, free skate, basketball training, indoor walking, and trail/hiking. Edson and Hinton were the only two communities which featured no evidence of either charity or community subsidization.

Discussion and Conclusion

Canadian Tire Jumpstart and KidSport offer individuals suffering from CRF subsidized exercise options. Only 6 of the 14 communities featured free exercise options. Excluding the AHLP (which can be individually tailored to a cancer survivors needs), none of the activities or group exercises found were only for cancer-survivors. As such, the AHLP is a necessary part of any community wanting to help adults suffering from CRF, and should be supported by other adult-inclusive free or subsidized programs. Research should continue to uncover the different fee-free exercise options available for those of all ages in Northern Alberta. At the same time, research should continue to resolve the best methods of exercise to alleviate CRF.

References

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Acknowledgement:

The mentorship of Dr. Diane Symbaluk in Sociology 315.