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7:00 p.m. Central

Friday, April 13, 2012

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Exercise Improves Quality Of Life During Breast Cancer Treatment

University of Miami study shows that women with non-metastatic breast cancer who are physically active and receive stress management intervention during treatment may reduce depression and lessen fatigue.

New Orleans, LA - Women undergoing treatment for breast cancer might fight off distressing side effects and improve psychological well-being by staying off the couch. According to the University of Miami (UM) study, women who are physically active during treatment have less depression and an enhanced quality of life and report less debilitating fatigue.

“Women who are physically active may also have more confidence in their own ability to continue with family-related, household, work-related, or social activities, which bring meaning and satisfaction to their lives,” says Jamie M. Stagl, MS, doctoral student in Clinical Health Psychology in the College of Arts and Sciences at UM and lead author of the study. “This may lead to appraisals of lower fatigue, heightened quality of life, and less depression.”

UM researchers studied the reported physical activity of 240 women recently diagnosed with non-metastatic breast cancer and recruited from four to 10 weeks post-surgery. Participants attended a 10-week, group-based Cognitive Behavioral Stress Management (CBSM) intervention, or a one-day psychoeducation “self-help” comparison group. In addition, researchers monitored the women’s reported physical activity levels.

While these researchers have previously shown that stress management improves breast cancer treatment, the current study reveals that there are additional benefits for women who are also physically active through treatment.

“Women who increased the amount of time they spent being physically active between the weeks after surgery and their adjuvant therapy had less ‘fatigue disruption’ --- their fatigue did not disrupt their ability to perform everyday activities,” Stagl says. “They also showed a decrease in depressed mood and an increase in quality of life.”

The study, titled “Physical Activity Adds to the Effects of Stress Management Intervention on Fatigue Interference, Depression, and Functional Quality of Life During Treatment for Breast Cancer,” was funded by the National Cancer Institute.

Co-authors are Michael H. Antoni, PhD, P.I. of the study, and professor of Psychology in the UM College of Arts and Sciences, and professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and program leader of Biobehavioral Oncology at the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center at the UM Miller School of Medicine; Suzanne Lechner, PhD, research assistant professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and member of the Biobehavioral Oncology program at the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center; John E. Lewis, PhD, associate professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Director of Research for

Complementary and Integrative Medicine; Sara Vargas, MS, doctoral student in the Behavioral Medicine program at UM; Stefan Gluck, MD, medical oncologist and professor of Medicine, and Clinical Director of the Braman Family Breast Cancer Institute at the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer and Charles Carver, professor and director of the adult psychology program in the Department of Psychology and member of the Biobehavioral Oncology program at the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center.

The Society of Behavioral Medicine is a multidisciplinary organization of clinicians, educators, and scientists dedicated to promoting the study of the interactions of behavior with biology and the environment and the application of that knowledge to improve the health and well being of individuals, families, communities, and populations. www.sbm.org

This study was presented during the 2012 Annual Meeting and Scientific Session of the Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) from April 11-14 in New Orleans, LA. However, it does not reflect the policies or the opinion of the SBM.

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