

Media Release

Wednesday 23 January, 2012

Physical activity for cancer survivors a service provider perspective

The international journal *Psycho-Oncology* has published a new study, undertaken by researchers at the Cancer Society Social and Behavioural Research Unit, on physical activity for people affected by cancer.

Previous studies have shown that being physically active is beneficial to people who have been diagnosed with cancer, but there has been little research examining the challenges faced by service providers involved in supporting their clients to be active.

In a country, such as New Zealand, which has a small population in relation to its geographical size, delivering physical activity programmes tailored to individual cancer patients' specific needs is not an easy task, especially in small and rural communities.

The support needed by cancer survivors to become physically active was reported to vary considerably, according to their particular diagnosis and stage of treatment. Concerns about body image or a lack of confidence about what they can safely manage to do, were also reported as being issues that might prevent cancer survivors from exercising.

The study found evidence that the Cancer Society used an array of approaches to help clients participate in physical activity, and these were shaped by the needs and capacity in each community. The study showed the varied approach taken by the Society, including providing regular physical activity groups (walking, yoga or Tai Chi groups); education; guest speakers at support groups; one-off exercise sessions to enable clients to try new activity; sponsorship of local community events, and referrals to externally delivered programmes for cancer survivors, was the key to success.

The research was supported by a research partnership between the Cancer Society and Curves Gymsnasiums.

For further information please contact:

Lynne St. Clair-Chapman
National Communications Manager
Telephone 04 494 7195
Mobile 027 4444 150