

Role of physiotherapy in palliative care

MD. Sheeba Kauser^{1,*}, Shahul S.A²

¹Physiotherapist, ²Resident, ¹Dept. of Physiotherapy, ²Dept. of Orthopaedics, Apollo Hospital, Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, India

***Corresponding Author:**

Email: sheebaishaq.doc@gmail.com

The growing cases of cancer survivors almost 1 in ever 20 adults and nearly 1 in 5 of all people over age 65 in the U.S have survived cancer,¹ with the help of services such as lymphedema therapy, hospice, and palliative care. Studies show that patients with the advanced care who received early palliative care reported better quality of life and have extension of span of years in life, where also the palliative care have provided to add life to their years.²

Larger population studies have identified a strong association between lower levels of physical activity and higher cancer mortality. Walking or cycling an average of 30 minutes per day has been associated with a 34% lower rate of cancer death and 33% improved cancer survival.³

Increasing numbers of studies are indicating that physical activity can reduce the incidence of cancer. World Health Organization recommends that 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic physical activity a week can reduce the risk of breast and colon cancers.⁴

Palliative care is an very good approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with the life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering with early detection and authentic and impeccable assessment and treatment aiming for physical, psychosocial and spiritual.⁵

Physiotherapy is an integral important part of palliative care. It aims to improve survivor's quality of life where mainly aims for functional ability and independence or gain relief from distressing symptoms.⁶ Palliative care is a rapidly expanding with involvement of physiotherapists. Implementation of a massage, relaxation therapy, exercise therapy program, respiratory rehabilitation, modified manual lymphedema a treatment has been assessed in the studies.^{7,12}

Authors conclude that physiotherapy intervention helps to maximize patients functional potential. Moreover high levels of satisfaction with the physiotherapy intervention were observed.

In past, rehabilitation was perceived as treatment which was to lead full recovery of a patient. This concept of rehabilitation may seem paradoxical in palliative care, especially for patients with an advanced illness who are approaching death. At present the purpose of rehabilitation is to improve the quality of life as discussed above not only "increasing years to the life but also to add life to the years." As that the patient

would feel more comfortable on getting functional independency he would feel a hope of recovery and would have positive approach to the treatment.¹³

Rehabilitation plays an important role significantly in treating the survivor. Elise and Fulton have thrown light on the importance of physiotherapy in palliative care optimizing patients level of physical function and take into consideration the inter lin between the physical, psychological, social and vocational domains of functions.¹⁴

Where as in the palliative care the goals of physiotherapist should be shortly achievable and should be realistic, the presence of physiotherapist should be flexible adapting to any approach to treat the patient with the demand and degree of the disease of the survivor. Studies have indicated a relationship between higher physical activity levels and lower mortality in cancer survivors. A recent meta-analysis reported that, post-diagnosis, physical activity reduced breast cancer deaths by 34%, all causes mortality by 41% and disease recurrence by 24%.¹⁵

Studies also indicate the volume of exercise necessary to bring benefits. The Nurses health study reported 50% fewer cancer recurrences in women who exercised more than three hours per week. Among people who have had colo-rectal cancer, a study found a 50% lower rate of recurrence and related death in those who exercised more than six hours per week.¹⁶

People think cancer care and palliative care are sequentially similar but where as they are optimally concurrent. Early palliative surely would have greater impact on the patient for having quality life expectancy. Definitely enough and good studies have been quoted for the importance of physiotherapist in the palliative care, cancer being a umbrella term with many extensions of disease and its rising demands physical therapist has their own demand in the fight for the disease.

Message by the Authors: After a descriptive editorial this article which describes the importance of physical therapist in the field of palliative care treating an dreading and devastating disease we hope to convey the importance of physiotherapist for quality of life with functional independency.....

Lets pledge out that with a team work of physiotherapists and (occupational and oncologists and oncosurgeons and with the persons needed) lets hope for the better life adding hope to the "cancer survivor".

Lets hope.....in coming years will shall strive

“Let cancer just be an zodaic sign not a breath taking disease”

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