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Factors perceived to influence exercise adherence in women with breast cancer participating in an exercise program during adjuvant chemotherapy: A focus group

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Women with breast cancer may experience a decrease in physical activity following the cancer diagnosis, and adhering to exercise interventions can be a challenge. Research is needed to identify motivational factors and barriers for exercise adherence among women during breast cancer treatment. This study aimed to explore factors influencing exercise adherence among breast cancer patients while following an exercise program. A qualitative design was applied to explore patient's perceptions of the challenges to exercise adherence during a randomized, controlled trial. Twenty-seven women with early stage breast cancer were purposively sampled for focus group interviews from their participation in the exercise intervention group. Five focus groups were performed. Five main themes were identified from the analysis which described factors participants perceived to influence their adherence to exercise during chemotherapy, and were: 'side-effects of breast cancer treatment as a barrier to exercise', 'restoring and maintaining normality in daily life motivates exercise', 'other valued activities compete with exercise', 'constructive support enhances exercise' and 'positive beliefs about efficacy and outcomes motivate exercise'. Adherence to the exercise intervention were challenged by internal and external conditions, and may be improved by attention to the impact of treatment side-effects, and by supporting patient self-efficacy towards changing health behavior. Health professionals should be aware that exercise adherence could be a challenge among women with breast cancer. They should help identify obstacles to exercise for women and ways to overcome them, as well as support them in their beliefs that they are capable of changing their health behavior.

Biography

Anne Marie Lunde Husebø is a PhD candidate from Department of Health Studies at University of Stavanger (UiS), Norway. She is conducting the PhD-project: "Exercise during breast cancer treatment. A study of physical and psychosocial outcomes, and motivational challenges", and has published 4 papers from the study. She is a registered nurse and holds a master's degree in Health Science from UiS. She represents the research area *Health promotion in long-term illness*.

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