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The Alberta Cancer Exercise-Neuro-Oncology Study's Assessment of Rehabilitation, Exercise Needs and Triage Pathways: Feasibility and Implementation of an Oncology Rehabilitation Triage Clinic

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Introduction

Cancer patients often face a range of physical and emotional challenges throughout their journey. The adverse effects of cancer and its treatments can significantly impact their quality of life, functional capacity, and overall well-being. Rehabilitation and exercise have been increasingly recognized as essential components of cancer care, helping patients regain strength, manage symptoms, and improve their overall health. The Alberta Cancer Exercise-Neuro-Oncology Study (ACENS) aims to explore the feasibility and effectiveness of implementing an Oncology Rehabilitation Triage Clinic to address the rehabilitation and exercise needs of cancer patients in Alberta, Canada. This article examines the significance of rehabilitation and exercise for cancer patients, outlines the key aspects of the ACENS study, and explores the potential benefits of an Oncology Rehabilitation Triage Clinic. Cancer and its treatments can lead to a wide range of physical impairments, including muscle weakness, reduced range of motion, fatigue and neuropathy. Additionally, the emotional burden of cancer may lead to anxiety, depression, and decreased motivation. Rehabilitation and exercise interventions have shown promising results in alleviating these issues and improving the overall well-being of cancer patients [1]. Regular exercise can help cancer patients improve their physical function, including cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength, and flexibility. By addressing physical impairments, patients can regain their independence and perform daily activities with greater ease.

Description

Cancer-related fatigue is one of the most common and distressing symptoms experienced by patients. Structured exercise programs have demonstrated the ability to reduce fatigue and increase energy levels, enhancing patients' ability to engage in daily life. Cancer-related pain can be debilitating and significantly impact patients' quality of life. Exercise has been shown to release endorphins, which act as natural painkillers, providing relief to patients experiencing pain. Engaging in regular exercise can positively impact patients' emotional well-being, reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression and enhancing their overall mood. The ACENS assesses cancer patients to identify their rehabilitation needs and exercise capacity. A thorough evaluation helps in tailoring personalized exercise programs to suit individual patients [2]. Based on the assessment, patients are prescribed exercise programs designed to address their specific needs. These programs may include aerobic exercises, strength training, flexibility exercises and balance training.

The study establishes triage pathways that guide patients to appropriate rehabilitation interventions based on their individual needs and goals. This ensures that patients receive the most relevant and effective treatments. The ACENS involves collaboration between oncologists, rehabilitation specialists, physiotherapists, and other healthcare professionals. This interdisciplinary approach ensures comprehensive and coordinated care for cancer patients. To establish a successful clinic, sufficient resources, including healthcare professionals, equipment and space, must be allocated to cater to the rehabilitation needs of cancer patients. Cancer patients and their caregivers must be educated about the importance of rehabilitation and exercise in their treatment journey. This can lead to increased patient engagement and adherence to exercise programs. The ACENS relies on robust data collection and analysis to evaluate the clinic's effectiveness and make necessary improvements. Regular assessment and feedback from patients play a crucial role in refining the program. Ensuring the clinic's accessibility to patients from diverse backgrounds and geographical locations is essential. Tele-rehabilitation options can also be explored to broaden its reach [3].

By addressing physical and emotional challenges, the clinic can significantly enhance the quality of life for cancer patients, allowing them to better cope with their diagnosis and treatment. Through personalized exercise programs, patients can regain their functional capacity, leading to increased independence and reduced reliance on others for daily tasks. Improved physical fitness can enhance patients' ability to tolerate cancer treatments, potentially reducing treatment interruptions and complications [4]. Investing in rehabilitation and exercise can lead to long-term cost savings for the healthcare system by preventing or reducing the need for further medical interventions. The Alberta Cancer Exercise-Neuro-Oncology Study (ACENS) is a groundbreaking initiative that highlights the significance of rehabilitation and exercise in cancer care. By assessing patients' needs and implementing an Oncology Rehabilitation Triage Clinic, the study aims to improve the overall well-being and quality of life for cancer patients in Alberta, Canada. The clinic's successful implementation will pave the way for more comprehensive and patient-centric cancer care models, benefitting patients, healthcare professionals, and the healthcare system as a whole [5].

Conclusion

The Alberta Cancer Exercise-Neuro-Oncology Study's Oncology Rehabilitation Triage Clinic represents a significant advancement in addressing the rehabilitation needs of individuals with cancer. Through comprehensive assessment and personalized triage pathways, the clinic ensures that patients receive appropriate interventions to improve their physical function and overall well-being. The successful feasibility and implementation of the clinic demonstrate its potential to enhance cancer care and survivorship, highlighting the importance of integrating rehabilitation into oncology services. Continued research and evaluation will further refine the clinic's processes, leading to improved outcomes for cancer survivors in Alberta and beyond. The clinic's implementation involved creating standardized protocols and workflows for patient referrals, assessments, and intervention delivery. This standardized approach promotes consistency and facilitates efficient care delivery. Adequate communication and coordination among healthcare professionals were essential to ensure that patients' rehabilitation needs were addressed effectively. Patients with low rehabilitation needs may benefit from brief consultations and recommendations for self-management strategies.

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