



Healthy Living after Cancer

A healthy lifestyle coaching program for cancer survivors



BACKGROUND

It is estimated that in Australia there are currently over 900,000 people living with and beyond cancer, and cancer survival rates continue to increase. However, cancer survivorship is associated with an increased risk of cancer recurrence or development of a new cancer, persistent side-effects of treatment, (e.g., fatigue), and co-morbid conditions (e.g., cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes).

Our Partners



To improve longer-term well-being, national cancer organisations recommend that cancer survivors engage in regular physical activity, eat a healthy diet and keep their weight within a healthy range. Although cancer survivors often have a strong desire to make healthy lifestyle changes, many struggle to do so without advice and support. Furthermore, although there is a large body of evidence supporting healthy lifestyle interventions for cancer survivors, including those using broad reach delivery modalities such as the telephone, such programs are not widely available or routinely offered as part of survivorship care. Healthy Living after Cancer is designed to fill this gap.

13 11 20

A free, confidential telephone information and support service run by Cancer Councils in each State and Territory.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Healthy Living after Cancer (HLaC) is a National Health and Medical Research Council Partnership project between Cancer Councils New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia and the Cancer Prevention Research Centre in the School of Public Health at the University of Queensland. It is a dissemination study and will evaluate the integration of an evidence-based lifestyle intervention for cancer survivors into the existing Cancer Council 13 11 20 information and support telephone service. The overarching aim is to determine whether the program is feasible and effective, and if so, to advocate for sustained funding so that it can be available to cancer survivors in Australia longer-term.



WHO IS PARTICIPATING

People treated for any type of cancer and who have completed treatment are able to take part at no cost and there is no limit on time since diagnosis. Cancer survivors from New South Wales, Victoria, the ACT, Tasmania, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Western Australia are eligible to take part.

WHAT DOES THE PROGRAM INVOLVE?

Participants in the Healthy Living after Cancer program receive 6 months of healthy lifestyle coaching, which includes a program workbook and up to 12 coaching calls, which are delivered by a nurse or health consultant at one of the participating Cancer Councils.

Participants are encouraged to set goals related to increasing physical activity, eating a healthy diet (particularly increasing serves of fruits and vegetables and decreasing saturated fat intake), and losing a moderate amount of weight, if appropriate. In each coaching call they receive advice and support towards meeting their goals, focusing on developing important skills, such as self-monitoring, problem solving, identifying social support, positive self-talk and self-reward. Calls are delivered on a tapered schedule (weekly, then fortnightly and finally monthly), with participants taking on more of a self-management role as calls progress so that they can feel confident in their ability to maintain healthy lifestyle changes after they have finished the program.

WHAT PARTICIPANTS ARE SAYING

“...I’m fitter, I feel more confident in my future prognosis...I’m happier with weight and fitness. I’m just happier...I’m so pleased that I was invited to participate in the program.”

“I’ve lost weight and feel more positive about things and feel healthier. It’s the best thing I’ve done since my cancer diagnosis...”

IMPLICATIONS

The Healthy Living after Cancer program provides a unique and rare opportunity for national dissemination of an evidence-based intervention to support healthy living among cancer survivors. Evaluation of the program will provide world-first evidence regarding the ability of such programs to be delivered on a wider scale. It will inform advocacy for sustained funding for the program with the ultimate goal to improve cancer survivors’ health and well-being throughout Australia

**This project
was funded by
NHMRC**



Australian Government
National Health and Medical Research Council

FIND OUT MORE

If you have questions about Healthy Living after Cancer or would like to enquire about joining the program please contact Ms Erin Robson on e.robson@uq.edu.au.