



ACTIVITY FOR CANCER SURVIVORS “IMPROVES FITNESS AND WEIGHT”

Cancer survivors who are encouraged to be physically active are fitter and are less likely to be overweight, according to a review of the evidence.

The review was carried out by researchers at the University of Hong Kong and funded by World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF). The results will be presented at the NCRI Cancer Conference in Liverpool today (Tuesday).

The researchers reviewed 31 published randomised controlled trials to look at the effect of physical activity interventions – programmes where people are encouraged to be more active – on several factors, including quality of life, and the chances of cancer survival and recurrence.

While there was not enough good quality evidence on the effect of being active on cancer survival and recurrence to draw firm conclusions, the researchers found significant evidence that physical activity interventions led to a lower body mass index (BMI) and to an increase in lean body mass.

The study also found a link between functional capacity – a combination of measures such as strength, stamina and mobility – and physical activity, including better performance in six-minute walking tests.

Dr Judy Ho, the lead researcher for the project, said: “These results suggest that being physically active following cancer treatment is a good way of maintaining a healthy weight and of maintaining fitness levels.

“The strength of evidence is quite strong so this gives cancer survivors a good reason to increase their physical activity levels.”

Dr Panagiota Mitrou, Deputy Head of Science for WCRF, said: “We recommend cancer survivors are regularly as physically active as their condition allows and this study adds further evidence that this is worth doing.

“But the lack of quality evidence on whether physical activity affects risk of cancer recurrence highlights the fact that cancer survivors do not have access to the same quality of advice as the rest of the population.

“This is why there needs to be more research in this area and we have identified it as one of our priority areas. We recently announced plans for the biggest ever review of the evidence on breast cancer survivorship.”

Dr Jane Cope, Director of the NCRI, said: “Cancer survivors sometimes ask what they can do themselves to help manage their condition and improve well-being. Now we have evidence that something as simple and inexpensive as physical activity can have a real benefit.”

ENDS

For more information, call Richard Evans on 020 7343 4253 or email r.evans@wcrf.org

Notes to Editors:

- 63% of the studies looked at breast cancer survivors, with the rest looking at other types of cancer.
- Randomised controlled trials avoid many of the types of bias that can be found in other studies. Controlled trials are often called the scientific ‘gold standard’. This can be true in many situations, but for physical activity interventions the results may be compromised because the people taking part will know whether they are doing physical activity or not.
- One of the problems the researchers faced was that the different studies had recorded results in different ways. The researchers have highlighted the need for standardising the way future studies are carried out to make it easier for future reviews of the evidence to collate the results.

About WCRF

World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) raises awareness that cancer is largely preventable and helps people make choices to reduce their chances of developing the disease.

This includes funding scientific research into how cancer risk is related to diet, physical activity, and weight management, and education programmes that highlight the fact that about a third of the most common cancers could be prevented through changes to lifestyle. For more information on the charity’s work, visit www.wcrf-uk.org

The WCRF report, called Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer: a Global Perspective, was launched in November 2007 and is the most comprehensive report ever published on the link between cancer and lifestyle. For more information, visit www.dietandcancerreport.org

About the NCRI Cancer Conference

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer Conference is the UK’s major forum for showcasing the best British and international cancer research. The Conference offers unique opportunities for networking and sharing knowledge by bringing together world leading experts from all cancer research disciplines. The seventh annual NCRI Cancer Conference is taking place from the 6-9 November 2011 at the BT Convention Centre in Liverpool. For more information visit www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference

About the NCRI

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) was established in April 2001. It is a UK-wide partnership between the government, charity and industry which promotes co-operation in cancer research among the 21 member organisations for the benefit of patients, the public and the scientific community. For more information visit www.ncri.org.uk

www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference

NCRI Cancer Conference Press Office

Angel Building, 407 St John Street, London EC1V 4AD

t: +44 (0)20 3469 8300 | +44 (0)7050 264 059 (out of hours) e: press@ncri.org.uk



NCRI members are: the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI); Association for International Cancer Research; Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council; Breakthrough Breast Cancer; Breast Cancer Campaign; Cancer Research UK; CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA, Department of Health (England); Economic and Social Research Council; Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research; Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research; Macmillan Cancer Support; Marie Curie Cancer Care;

Medical Research Council; Northern Ireland Health and Social Care (Research & Development Office); Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation; Scottish Government Health Directorates (Chief Scientist Office); Tenovus; Welsh Assembly Government (Wales Office of Research and Development for Health & Social Care); The Wellcome Trust; and Yorkshire Cancer Research.