Determinants of Physical Activity Maintenance in Breast Cancer Survivors After a Community-Based Intervention

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Purpose/Objectives: To determine whether empirically selected and social cognitive theory-based factors, including baseline characteristics and modifiable behavioral and psychosocial factors, were determinants of physical activity (PA) maintenance in breast cancer survivors (BCSs) six months after a PA intervention.

Design: Single-group longitudinal study.

Setting: The Breast Health Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Sample: 42 survivors with stage 0–III breast cancer who completed chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy.

Methods: The community-based PA intervention included six weekly education and practice sessions on home-based aerobic, resistance, balance, and flexibility exercises.

Main Research Variables: The dependent variable, PA maintenance, was determined based on PA level measurement at six months postintervention. The independent variables of baseline characteristics (age, stage of cancer, and chronic musculoskeletal symptoms) and modifiable behavioral and psychosocial factors (PA level, fatigue, PA self-efficacy in overcoming barriers and performing tasks) were assessed at baseline and postintervention.

Findings: Multivariate regression analyses revealed that baseline fatigue and chronic musculoskeletal symptoms were the only factors significantly associated with PA maintenance.

Conclusions: Baseline fatigue level and chronic musculoskeletal symptoms were significant determinants of PA maintenance in breast cancer survivors who had completed a community-based PA intervention. However, other key factors were considered.

Implications for Nursing: Prior to participation in community-based PA interventions, clinicians should take into account the effects of high baseline fatigue levels and chronic musculoskeletal symptoms on potential PA maintenance, and consider additional assessments and support for BCSs to sustain their PA behavioral change.