



Fall/Winter 2017 Newsletter

Sunflower Wellness

Sunflower Wellness empowers people living with cancer to find strength and support through exercise

Sunflower Steps into Cancer and Exercise Research

By Regan Fedric

Sunflower Wellness concentrates on helping people with cancer get exercise. Our Exercise Counseling service operates in clinical settings, including the cancer centers at UCSF, Stanford and Marin General Hospital, and our classes are offered in several Bay Area gyms.

This year, we've begun to participate in research studies as well, with most of our Exercise Counselors now involved in efforts to measurably demonstrate the benefits of exercise for cancer patients. And in 2018, we're slated to take things a big step forward by hosting a prominent international effort to provide research-based guidelines for cancer-exercise practitioners.

We are pleased to present an overview of the research studies in which Sunflower Wellness team members currently participate.

* Marin Cancer Care - Center for Integrative Health & Wellness (CIHW)

Exercise Counselors Jenny Johnson, Ginny Erwin, and Kim Kouri are involved in two cancer-focused research programs on a weekly basis:

ADT Study – This effort focuses on men with prostate cancer going through Androgen Deprivation Therapy (ADT). The primary interventions in the study are exercise and nutrition. Our Exercise Counselors consult with participants every other month, alternating with Registered Dietician, Pamela Riggs. The exercise prescription is delivered in the first session and follow-up/progression steps occur throughout the six-month period. The end goal is to minimize treatment side effects. These include managing body composition, decreasing recurrence rates and improving overall quality of life.

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Health Spotlight: The Benefits of Water Exercise after Breast Cancer Surgery

By Rena Goldman, Aquatics International

A study published in August has begun to attract attention for its focus on the benefits of swimming and water-based exercise for improving fatigue and strength in breast cancer survivors. According to Aquatics International (AI), the study, published in the European Journal of Cancer Care, followed women who underwent breast cancer surgery and participated in a weekly water exercise group.



Sunflower swimmers in the pool at Rolling Hills Club, Novato, CA

According to AI, "they cited easily modified weightless exercise, social interaction and access to a private dressing room as motivators to continue water-based exercise.

"Remaining physically active is an important part of overall health, even among people undergoing cancer treatment. For breast cancer patients, exercise can help with fatigue, depression and muscle weakness. There is evidence to suggest that aquatic exercise programs in deep water are effective for improving fatigue and strength in breast cancer survivors.

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Featured in this issue:

- Sunflower Steps into Cancer and Exercise Research
- The Benefits of Water Exercise after Breast Cancer Surgery
- Survey says: Exercise Counseling Gets You Moving!
- Kim Kouri: In Her Own Words
- Save the Date! Spring Bling, March 24, 2018

Sunflower and Cancer and Exercise Research

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So far, adherence is good and participants are maintaining/gaining muscle mass, losing weight and feeling less joint pain, fatigue and moodiness.

Strength After Breast Cancer (SABC) – a research-based intervention.

This study was initially implemented and later published by Sunflower Wellness Medical Advisory Board member Katie Schmitz. A Marin-based non-profit, To Celebrate Life Breast Cancer Foundation, provided grant funding in 2016 to launch this onsite program to help women at risk of or living with lymphedema. It is a safe, guided strength training program that runs for four weeks. Our Exercise Counselors have been certified in the SABC protocol, and partner with Physical Therapist Dina Griffith for pre and post evaluations. All participants receive a set of hand weights, a fitness bag, resistance band, and water bottle upon entry. The feedback has been quite positive and most women continue with a routine after completing the program, either at home or in Sunflower Wellness exercise programs around Marin County.

*** Stanford Cancer Center**

Exercise Counselors Julie Grosvenor, Regan Fedric, and Charis Pontis are preparing to start their participation in a study with post-treatment endometrial cancer patients. Exercise is the lead intervention, with hopes of reducing long-term treatment side effects, managing body composition (fat vs. lean muscle), and decreasing recurrence rates.

Patient recruitment for the study will begin in late 2017. Exercise Counseling sessions will focus on implementing a walking program with regular follow-up sessions built in over a six-month period. We hope this is a starting point for developing a program to increase physical activity for the GynOnc Survivorship clinic at Stanford.

*** Kaiser Permanente of Northern California**

FORCE – Focus On Reducing Dose-Limiting Toxicities in Colon Cancer with Resistance Exercise

Regan Fedric was hired in October to work with Kaiser in Oakland on a new colon cancer research study involving exercise. The study will recruit from regional Kaiser Permanente Cancer Centers in the Bay Area, Penn State Cancer Institute and Dana Farber Cancer Institute. Katie Schmitz is a lead investigator with the FORCE trial, and is joined by Dr. Jeffery Meyerhardt from Dana Farber and Dr. Bette Caan at Kaiser Permanente. The goal of the exercise intervention is to build or maintain muscle mass while participants are undergoing chemotherapy. 180 newly-diagnosed Stage 2 and 3 colon cancer patients are expected to enroll in this trial.

Water Exercise and Breast Cancer

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“Breast cancer presents unique challenges. For instance, surgery and chemotherapy can hinder the ability to perform weight-bearing exercise. Breast cancer survivors also encounter lymphedema, a swelling caused by either the removal or damage to lymph nodes.

“Water exercise allows people to regain flexibility and range of motion when submerged. Breast cancer survivors can still reap the health benefits of gaining energy and reducing swelling and discomfort.”

Sunflower Wellness is pleased to offer Aqua classes for our participants at some of our gym locations. Please see our website (“Find Classes”) for further information.

References:

Aquatics International, Rena Goldman, “Health Spotlight: Water Exercise and Breast Cancer,” Sept. 25, 2017, http://www.aquaticsintl.com/facilities/health-spotlight-water-exercise-and-breast-cancer_0

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Enblom, A., Lindquist, H., and Bergmark, K. (2017). Participation in water-exercising long-term after breast cancer surgery: Experiences of significant factors for continuing exercising as a part of cancer rehabilitation. *European Journal of Cancer Care*, e12736. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1111/ecc.12736>

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Sunflower Wellness, By the Numbers



- Exercise Counseling sessions: 3,600
- Total direct clients served: 1,100
- Class sessions logged: 5,355
- Personal training sessions: 2,081
- Total client-hours of exercise: Over 25,000 !!

"I like being in a room full of people who are sharing my struggle. The instructors are excellent, sensitive, helpful and caring. I feel stronger and more centered."
– Sunflower Wellness participant at Bay Club Marin

Survey says: Exercise Counseling Gets You Moving – and Keeps You Moving!

By Chris Brettingen

When a client starts with Sunflower Wellness, one of our trained cancer exercise specialists customizes an exercise program for him or her. This free Exercise Counseling session takes into consideration each client's symptoms, treatment, and ongoing care, including surgeries, chemotherapy, and radiation.

That planning has important benefits, as shown by a 2016 client survey which Sunflower Wellness conducted, with 125 people providing feedback.

We learned that clients are almost equally likely to start working with Sunflower while in treatment (43%) as they are after treatment (51%).

We were happy to see that two-thirds felt that their meeting with an Exercise Counselor was much better or better than expected – including over one-fourth saying it was much better than expected.

This in turn leads to strong satisfaction with their exercise program – with two-thirds saying that their Sunflower exercise program currently being practiced is better than expected, including one-third saying much better.

And the research provides great insights into how exercise benefits our clients. When following their Sunflower exercise plan after treatment:

- Fully three-fourths report less depression
- Two-thirds or more report each of these benefits:
 - o a stronger core
 - o increased strength
 - o improved muscle tone
 - o increased flexibility
 - o improved range of movement– incredible results!
- Another six in ten: improved balance, increased stamina, and
- Just over half report reduced fatigue.

Conclusion: Please don't wait until treatment ends to get your Exercise Counseling plan – Sunflower Wellness can help you early on in your cancer journey. Our exercise program will help keep you moving, make you stronger and keep you happier!

For more information and to sign up for a free one-hour Sunflower Wellness Exercise Counseling session, please see our website at sunflowerwellness.org.

Well, That Was Fun! Summer Splash, Bay Club at The Gateway

Sunflower Wellness welcomed a great turn-out of donors, clients, supporters and class instructors at its first-ever Summer Splash event, hosted by the Bay Club at Bay Club at The Gateway in San Francisco. Our guests enjoyed a beautiful location, nestled downtown near the Embarcadero, and fantastic afternoon and evening weather. All of it made for quite a successful first-year event.



Sunflower Wellness Program Director Jane Clark with a special edition Johnny Cupcakes T-shirt and memorial candles at Summer Splash

Sunflower Wellness would especially like to thank Jane Clark for her leadership and perseverance, and Trisha Hue, who was instrumental in making the event run smoothly. And a huge thank-you to the Bay Club for hosting the event, along with all the volunteers and fashion show models who came out to help. It was a lovely evening and everyone was in good spirits. We hope to do it again next year – so please stay tuned! Many thanks also to the event committee – we could not have done it without you: Bob Young, Regan Fedric, Derek Barnes, Carrie Bonnet, Joanne Harrison and Tricia Probert.



Summer Splash guests set memorial candles afloat on the pool at Bay Club at The Gateway, July 27th



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Exercise of the Month: Floor Angels

Sunflower Wellness presents "Floor Angels" with the assistance of WebExercises. A library of Exercises of the Month is available at Sunflowerwellness.org.

Floor Angels are chest stretches that help to increase range of motion, shoulder strength and muscular endurance. They are especially helpful following mastectomy or upper thoracic surgery such as for lung or throat cancers. Beginners should use the wall and do this simple stretch vertically. For a more moderate level you can do the exercise on the floor, as shown. A more advanced level is to do the same exercise while lying on top of a foam roller.

For a short video demonstration, watch here: <http://tinyurl.com/mandyeve>



Starting Position

Begin lying face up on the floor. Bend knees with feet flat on the floor. Place arms to sides below shoulders level, with elbows bent to 90° and palms facing up.



Movement

While attempting to maintain forearm contact with the floor, slide arms upward, squeezing shoulder blades together. Once forearm can no longer keep contact with the floor, slowly return to start position and repeat prescribed repetitions and sets.



Sunflower Wellness Board member and Exercise Counselor Kim Kouri with her daughter Hayley March

Kim Kouri: In Her Own Words

I see Sunflower Wellness as a bit of joy in a space and time that is not very pleasant. I met Sunflower during my first diagnosis back in 2012, and I've been a fan ever since. My experience with the organization has and does include a multitude of roles - client, employee and now Board member - but I think my favorite is teaching group exercise classes. I've taught group exercise since the days of Jane Fonda and step aerobics, so I know the power of movement and how beneficial it is for all of us, especially as we go through our individual cancer journeys. Education is key. I love that we share our knowledge with everyone and anyone who will listen.

If you want to really see the beauty that is Sunflower Wellness, come to a class. What always puts a smile on my face is seeing our clients doing things they didn't think they could do and enjoying themselves while doing it. Our classes are fun - people laugh, and I believe that for the hour that they are with me or any of our instructors, they don't think about cancer. Believe me, it's a great hour. Our community is rich with encouragement and smiles! Sunflower is such a gift in so many ways, and I am truly blessed to be on the team.

Many Thanks! ... to the Val A. Browning Charitable Foundation for generously supporting Sunflower Wellness with a capacity-building grant for 2017-2018.

Mark your calendar! March 24, 2018

We are pleased to announce that Spring Bling 2018 returns to The Club at Harbor Point on Saturday, March 24, 2018. Sponsored by The Harbor Point Charitable Foundation, the evening promises another round of fun, delicious food and dancing. Please join us!!

Learn, Like and Follow Us

www.sunflowerwellness.org



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