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CONTACT: Heather R. Huhman
(301) 652-6611 x 2963
praota@aota.org

STUDY: THE BREAST CANCER RECOVERY PROGRAM[®] SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTS WOMEN WITH BREAST CANCER RELATED LYMPHEDEMA

BCRP Significantly Reduces Swelling Caused by Arm Lymphedema, Increases Arm and Shoulder Movement, Promotes Wanted Weight Loss, Improves Mood and Quality of Life

Pittsburgh, PA — A new study could provide a previously-unavailable baseline standard of care program of exercise for the estimated 20 percent of patients with breast cancer who develop breast cancer related lymphedema (BCRL). The research, conducted by University of Pittsburgh and published in the January/February 2010 issue of the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, shows the Breast Cancer Recovery Program[®] (BCRP) could serve as a model for appropriate exercise in treating BCRL.

The BCRP was found to significantly reduce swelling caused by arm lymphedema, increase arm and shoulder movement, promote wanted weight loss, improve mood and quality of life in a controlled, evidence-based study of 32 women with BCRL.

“This is the first evidence-based, controlled study to demonstrate swelling reduction in the affected arm through exercise and relaxation in individuals with BCRL,” said Marjorie K. McClure, OTR/L, CLT-LANA, Irene McLenahan Young Investigator at the Magee-Womens Research Institute in Pittsburgh. “The role of occupational therapy as it pertains to cancer intervention is to improve the quality of the patient’s life, however they see it.”

The exercise group participants attended one-hour 10 biweekly sessions for five weeks, followed by a three-month self-monitored home program period. Each structured session included participation in the video, “From Lymphedema Onto Wellness” (FLOW[®]). Also, during each session, verbal instructions with accompanying written educational material were highlighted in topics related to lymphedema, coping techniques and relaxation techniques. Each session concluded with a question-and-answer component and group discussion. Participants were instructed to complete the FLOW[®] video and relaxation techniques at home daily. The control group participants continued to follow instructions from their health professionals.

“Study results show the Breast Cancer Recovery Program[®], using a 17-minute video, provided significant therapeutic results, indicating a longer duration of exercise may not be required to get significant positive results,” said McClure.

The BCRP can be used for long- or short-term goals by an individual under the instruction of a trained medical professional for use at home or in structured individual or group therapeutic sessions. It can be completed in standing, seated or lying positions. Also, the individual can use the visual images and storyline from the program video without exercise for the purpose of emotional goals.

Authors: Along with M. McClure, study authors included Richard J. McClure, PhD, of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center; Richard Day, PhD, of the Department of Biostatistics within the Graduate School of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh; and Adam M. Brufsky, MD, PhD, co-director of the breast cancer program with the Division of Hematology/Oncology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

Reference: *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, Vol. 64, No. 1.

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