

**A 5 Year Follow-up Survey On Health & Exercise Habits In Women Breast Cancer Survivors.**

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**Introduction:** Recent reports on physical activity show a risk reduction in breast cancer (BC) incidence (Bernstein, 1994, Thune, 1997). Clinical studies in exercise therapy show reduction in fatigue & pain (Dimeo, 1997), improvement in quality of life (Segar, 1998, Durak, 1998), increases in strength, endurance, & ADLs (Durak, 1998). With the increased interest in exercise for cancer survivors, there is little knowledge of long term health status in patients who participate in chronic conditioning programs. **Methods:** A two year follow-up survey (Durak, 1998) detailed continued improvements in quality of life in breast cancer survivors compared to non-exercisers. Presently we report on quality of life, health care status, & exercise participation in a group of BC survivors at five years post-diagnosis. **Results:** The women (n=18, age=62  $\pm$  13 yr., cancer stage 2.0  $\pm$  0.6, wt=55  $\pm$  7 kg, education level 3.5 yr. college  $\pm$  1.5, oncology treatment = 18  $\pm$  12 weeks) participated in the SBAC Cancer Well-fit 10 week exercise program after their cancer diagnosis. At five years, a survey on health status, medical concerns, & lifestyle issues was conducted. Results indicated that although all had BC surgery (100%) and all continue to see their oncologist at five years (5  $\pm$  11 visits/yr.), their health status is exceptional. Level of vigor (on 10 pt. scale) = 8.4  $\pm$  2.2. There were no incidence rates of lymphedema (only 3 experience minor swelling), and the rate of total infections was 33%. Although 33% attended support groups, over 60% felt the Well-fit program was a type of support group. At five years, 94% of respondents continue to exercise at home or at a health club. Only 50% have changed their diet after diagnosis, but 94% use supplements daily. 77% use some type of alternative health regime (prayer, meditation, yoga are most utilized). At five years there are no reported deaths or recurrences in Cancer Well-fit BC participants. The results of this survey support recent reports (Van de Creek, 1999) on the importance of chronic exercise as part of a lifestyle program to improve the odds of survival after breast cancer diagnosis.