



VTAAC Update – Cancer Survivor Physical Activity Prescription Project

October 23, 2024

VTAAC Quality of Life Taskforce Meeting

Sharon Mallory, Vermont Department of Health

Project aligns with 2025 Vermont Cancer Plan

Survivorship & Advanced Care Planning

Goal 13. Promote optimal health for Vermonters with cancer throughout their lives.

Objectives	Measures	
	BASELINE (YEAR)	TARGET (2025)
13.1 Increase % of adult cancer survivors who report always or usually receiving social and emotional support (BRFSS*).	76% (2018)	79%
13.2 Increase % of adult cancer survivors who report that their general health is good to excellent (BRFSS).	73% (2018)	77%
13.3 Decrease % of adult cancer survivors who currently use any tobacco product (cigarettes, e-cigarettes and chew) (BRFSS).	24% (2017) ⁴²	23%
13.4 Increase % of adult cancer survivors who meet current physical activity guidelines (BRFSS).	62% (2019) ⁴³	65%
13.5 Increase % of adult cancer survivors eating five or more fruits & vegetables per day (BRFSS).	29% (2019) ⁴⁴	31%

*Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System
42-44. Measure is age adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population.

Planned intervention

- Vermont one of 11 States selected to attend Survivorship EBI workshop
- VT Team chose EBI focusing on exercise Rx for survivors
- Formalize provider recommendation for survivors to be physically active
- Address inconsistency of physical activity recommendations for survivors by different providers within hospital systems
- Create system and tool that not only refers to specific programs but also refers survivors to less formal/local physical activity opportunities

Strong
Evidence



Exercise prescriptions

Provide patients with prescriptions for exercise plans, often accompanied by progress checks at office visits, counseling, activity logs, and exercise testing.

Implementation Approach 2021 - 2022

- Printed exercise Rx tool that allows providers to recommend individually tailored physical activity.
- Guidance on use of the tool to oncology providers (including mid-level providers) at UVM and CVMC.
- Planned Realistic evaluation measures to align with hospital/staff/EMR capacity
- After a lengthy planning process - rollout of the tool began on January 27, 2022.



R_x FOR: _____

PRESCRIPTION:

- RESISTANCE TRAINING
Weights, Pilates, Bodyweight Exercise
- MOBILITY AND BALANCE
Yoga, Stretches, Calisthenics
- AEROBIC
Walk, Run, Bike, Hike, Swim, Dance

FREQUENCY: _____

NOTES: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

THE
University of Vermont
HEALTH NETWORK
Central Vermont Medical Center



Exercise is Medicine

Research shows that oncology rehabilitation can improve fatigue, quality of life, and pain levels in cancer survivors. Exercise can thoroughly enhance your strength, flexibility, and balance as well as:

- Decrease Fatigue
- Improve Sleep
- Improve function
- Decrease risk of cancer coming back
- Decrease likelihood and severity of other chronic diseases

A new report highlights a growing body of evidence showing that regular exercise may help you survive if you have cancer, while also preventing certain types of cancer.

The report, from the American College of Sports Medicine's Roundtable on Exercise and Cancer, summarizes a "substantial accumulation" of new data over the past decade and concludes that "there is consistent, compelling evidence that physical activity plays a role in preventing many types of cancer and for improving longevity among cancer survivors."

Process and Outcome Evaluation - 2022

Implementation tracking at each hospital

- **35** providers participated in education sessions
- **175** exercise Rx pamphlets were distributed
- **29** posters were placed in exam rooms



Average number of
exercise prescriptions
used per provider

UVM **3.3** CVMC **8.6**

Changes in providers' attitudes, awareness, and practice over time

Pre-survey and 3-month follow-up survey

- **44%** of providers (4 out of 9) reported that they gave out exercise Rx
- Providers asked patients about their level of physical activity **more often** after three months than they did at the beginning of the project (n=9, $p = .018$)
- Providers were **slightly more likely** to encourage patients to engage in physical activity than refer them to an exercise program

Key Takeaways

- Strong **partnership** among organizations
- Pamphlet and posters were **lasting benefit**, though **placement** influenced visibility and use
- Implementation **varied by hospital** showing context matters
- Providers viewed exercise as **very important** for cancer patients
- Providers engaged in more **conversations** about physical activity with patients
- Substantial barriers to **practice/systems change**
- Multiple **patient barriers** to engagement in physical activity to be addressed

Vermont's Exercise Prescriptions for Cancer Survivors Project: Evaluation Highlights

Vermont's Exercise Prescriptions for Cancer Survivors project is a partnership between the Vermont Department of Health (VDH), American Cancer Society (ACS), and the two cancer hospitals Central Vermont Medical Center (CVMC) and University of Vermont (UVM) Medical Center. Vermont's 12-month project was one of eleven selected by the Comprehensive Cancer Control (CCC) National Partnership to implement an evidence-based intervention (EBI) for cancer survivors around physical activity and nutrition.

Vermont selected the EBI of giving cancer patients prescriptions for exercise because of the inconsistency of physical activity recommendations for cancer survivors and a need to integrate provider recommendations more formally into the care process in VT hospitals. This brief summarizes findings from an evaluation, conducted in 2022 by external evaluators at Professional Data Analysts (PDA), of the project's implementation at UVM and CVMC, successes, challenges and barriers, lessons learned, and key takeaways to inform program development.

Vermont's exercise prescription recommended personalized exercise and offered multiple in-person and virtual resources

Vermont's exercise prescription was designed as a tri-fold pamphlet that covered multiple pieces of information, including the benefits of exercise for cancer survivors, a description of the [Steps to Wellness Program](#) at UVM, a space for providers to write in their recommended "prescription" for patients, and a list of local, virtual, and other resources. Exercise prescriptions were placed in clinic exam rooms for providers to distribute.

Posters raised awareness of the benefits of exercise

Additionally, small media posters for clinic spaces were designed and developed by the project team. 15 posters were placed at CVMC and 14 at UVM in clinic spaces. The posters list the benefits of exercise for cancer survivors and encourage patients to ask their provider for a prescription and resources.

- Project team included:
- Sharon Mallory, MPH, VDH, CCC Program
 - Kim Dittus, MD, UVM Cancer Center
 - Diane Jones, MS, CVMC
 - Leigh Sampson, MPH, ACS
 - Suzanne Kelley, MSW, VDH, Physical Activity and Nutrition Program



Program poster

Exercise prescription page



Created by PDA | December 2023

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always or often (n=6), whereas 21% reported they rarely referred patients. (n=4)

"A couple patients noticed the flyer on the wall of the exam room. I have completed a few Survivorship visits where I always include a conversation about diet and exercise." – CVMC Provider

Created by PDA | December 2023

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Current Project Status

- Winter 2023/2024 - New CVMC staff informally assessed provider teams. Found low engagement in need for PA/limited awareness of Rx templates.
- UVM and CVMC continuing to provide limited printed Rx forms, use likely very limited.
- UVM Champion left her position in June 2024.
- Very initial planning to support provider education at CVMC/UVM around importance of survivorship physical activity.
- Overlap questions: VTAAC Survivor Project ECHO.



Thank you!

Discussion Questions

Project ECHO:

- What input do you have on the ECHO Topic areas?
- Do you have suggestions for speakers for the ECHO (or other similar opportunities)?

PA Rx Project:

- Do you have suggestions for continuing/improving the PA Rx project? How can we better integrate this into health systems?

Collaboration of PA Rx and ECHO:

- What overlap is there between the Physical Activity Rx work and the ECHO? How can we use the structure/content of the ECHO to increase provider conversations about PA/Nutrition with cancer survivors?

Patient Navigation:

- What opportunities are there to support and promote the upcoming SVMC patient navigation project?