

Multipronged intervention treated persistent fatigue effectively in breast cancer survivors

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A group-based, holistic, mind-body intervention was equally effective in treating persistent fatigue and improving quality of life for breast cancer survivors, regardless of their race.

"All women, black and white alike, reported significant improvement in fatigue post program completion, and improvement was maintained without further intervention," said researcher Susan E. Appling, M.S., C.R.N.P., nurse practitioner with the Prevention and Research Center at Mercy Medical Center.

These results were presented here, at the Third AACR Conference on the Science of Cancer Health Disparities.

For breast cancer survivors, persistent fatigue has multiple contributing factors including pain, sleep disturbance, depression, anxiety, decreased physical activity, weight gain and treatment-induced menopausal symptoms.

"Persistent fatigue is one of the most common lingering problems affecting breast cancer survivors," she said. "Programs focused on helping patients transition from active treatment to cancer survivorship are an important component of an overall [cancer treatment](#) plan."

The Mercy Medical Center Prevention and Research Center Team created an intervention program that consisted of relaxation techniques (i.e. deep breathing and guided imagery), optimization of nutrition and

physical activity, introduction to restorative yoga techniques, and [cognitive behavioral therapy](#) to help make positive lifestyle changes.

Fatigue rates were measured in 206 breast cancer survivors at the beginning of the program, at study completion, and two and six months after completion.

Appling and colleagues also investigated if one race benefited from the intervention more than another. One-third of the study population was black; the rest were white.

Regardless of race, results showed decreased levels of self-reported fatigue among breast cancer survivors, and sustained and improved energy after participation in the intervention program, according to Appling. Black women had slightly higher fatigue scores across all four data collection periods compared to white women, but the difference was not statistically significant.

"In our group of breast cancer survivors, race did not play a role in fatigue improvement," she said. "Overall, women with the common symptom of persistent fatigue benefited equally from this group-based holistic program."

Appling believes since fatigue among breast cancer survivors is a common shared experience, regardless of one's race, the intervention would have a positive impact.

"[Breast cancer](#) survivors with fatigue took immediate comfort from knowing that they were not alone in battling this problem," she said. "Patients need to know that they can take positive steps to help alleviate this symptom."

Provided by American Association for Cancer Research

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