

A phone call can change your life, study finds

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They say a phone call can change your life and for colorectal or bowel cancer survivors this is true, a new study by a QUT researcher has found.

Associate Professor Anna Hawkes, from QUT's Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation, evaluated the effects of a telephone delivered program called CanChange aimed at improving health outcomes for

people diagnosed with [bowel cancer](#).

The study was conducted at the Cancer Council Queensland and funded by the Australian Government, Cancer Australia.

The CanChange program targeted health behaviours such as levels of physical activity, weight management and diet as these are known to have a significant effect on physical functioning, quality of life and fatigue after a bowel [cancer diagnosis](#). Importantly they may also affect the chance of [cancer recurrence](#), and survival.

She said the study, published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, found at the end of a 12 month trial that bowel cancer survivors who had received regular telephone support were more physically active, maintained their body weight and had a healthier diet.

The study compared the health behaviours of two groups of bowel cancer survivors, one of which participated in the CanChange program.

"After 12 months we found a significant and positive difference in the physical activity of people who participated in the CanChange program," she said.

"CanChange participants also maintained their [body mass index](#) (BMI) whereas those who didn't take part in the trial significantly increased their BMI. Participants also reduced their fat intake and increased their [vegetable intake](#)."

Associate Professor Hawkes said bowel cancer was a leading cause of illness and death in Australia and the western world.

"The five year survival rate has increased to 65 per cent, but survivors still face many physical and mental challenges that can have a significant

effect on their quality of life," she said.

"But despite the challenges associated with a cancer diagnosis and treatment, survivors can be motivated to make behavioural improvements like those targeted in the CanChange program that can have a very positive effect on their lives."

Associate Professor Hawkes, who was also a finalist in the 2013 Women in Technology awards sponsored by IHBI for her work with telephone delivered programs, said this study was the first of its kind to use the telephone to target a range of health behaviours to improve [health outcomes](#) specifically for bowel cancer survivors.

She said the success of this program made way for the program to be rolled out across Australia as well as internationally.

"Telephone-delivered programs are acceptable to [cancer survivors](#) as they are convenient, flexible and can be delivered across the country. They are also relatively low cost," she said.

"The CanChange program would be immediately translatable through existing telephone helplines which are widely used for patients with cancer in Australia and other countries."

The paper is titled "Effects of a Telephone-Delivered Multiple Health Behaviour Change intervention (CanChange) on Health and Behavioral Outcomes in Survivors of Colorectal Cancer: a Randomized Controlled Trial."

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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