

Post-treatment health education program improves quality of life for breast cancer patients

October 10 2014, by Karen Milliner



A QUT health researcher in collaboration with The Wesley Hospital Kim Walters Choices Program has found that women treated for breast cancer improved their quality of life after completing a specially designed post-treatment health intervention program.

Lead researcher Professor Debra Anderson, from QUT's Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation, today (10 October) outlined the findings of The Pink Women's Wellness Program pilot study at a Kim Walters Choices Program (Choices) fundraising Pink High Tea held at Treasury Heritage Hotel.

Choices Clinical Nurse Manager, Janine Porter-Steele, also announced that The Pink Women's Wellness Program would be incorporated into Choices' support services from next year.

Professor Anderson said the feedback from focus groups was that [women](#) who have completed breast [cancer treatment](#) can feel deflated, overwhelmed by information and advice, and unsure about the best options to help them maximise their [health](#).

"The Pink Women's Wellness Program was designed to help women make sense of information and medical evidence, and to support them with a practical, week-by-week, step-by-step plan to help them make the best choices for them," she said.

"The aim of our study was to see a decrease in the distressing menopausal symptoms women experienced after their cancer treatment, and to help them establish healthy lifestyle habits to promote wellness and reduce post-menopause risks associated with cardiovascular disease, diabetes and osteoporosis."

Professor Anderson said the 12-week pilot study program, delivered by Choices, involved face-to-face consultations with nursing specialists, goal setting and tailored health education.

The women who undertook the program reported clinically significant reductions in their menopausal symptoms at 12 weeks as well as improvements in their physical and functional well-being.

Donna, 45, was among the study participants to complete the program. "When my cancer treatment finally came to an end, instead of feeling fit, happy and full of life as I had expected, I struggled with weight gain, lack of self-esteem and a general feeling of frustration," she said.

"It wasn't until I was introduced to The Pink Women's Wellness Program research study that I started to realise there were solutions and I could see a light at the end of the tunnel.

"I really valued having time to talk to a qualified health professional and breast care nurse who guided and mentored me throughout the program. Because of this, I didn't find it difficult to do and it was great to have the journal and book to refer to when I needed a gentle reminder."

Following on from The Pink Women's Wellness Program study, Professor Anderson is leading an Australia-wide research project investigating the benefits of a structured [wellness program](#) delivered via an e-health platform to women treated for a variety of cancers: breast, blood and/or gynaecological cancer.

The study of the e-health Women's Wellness after Cancer Program is one of 11 research projects to share \$7.9 million in funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council's Partnerships for Better Health - Partnership Projects.

"Many women, both in rural and regional towns as well as in cities, are unable to access face-to-face programs due to geographic, time or other constraints," Professor Anderson said.

"The Women's Wellness after Cancer Program has been developed as an accessible IT health solution to provide a structured post-cancer treatment support program."

Professor Anderson said the research team is working with a range of partner organisations on the study, including Choices, and is currently recruiting women to take part. Participants must have completed chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy in the past 12 months and have access for the duration of the study to an iPad or Apple computer. Contact

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Provided by Queensland University of Technology

Citation: Post-treatment health education program improves quality of life for breast cancer patients (2014, October 10) retrieved 26 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-10-post-treatment-health-quality-life-breast.html>

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