

Study links physical activity to quality of life in African American cancer survivors

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New research suggests that regular exercise may improve the well-being of African American cancer survivors, but most survivors do not meet current recommendations for physical activity. The findings are published early online in *Cancer*, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Cancer Society (ACS).

Because regular [physical activity](#) can influence a variety of factors that affect survival after a [cancer diagnosis](#), the ACS [recommends](#) that cancer survivors engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week. For most cancers, African American patients have a higher likelihood of dying from their disease than other racial or [ethnic groups](#), and preliminary research suggests that they engage in lower levels of physical activity.

To assess levels of physical activity in African American cancer survivors and to examine the relationship between such physical activity and their health-related quality of life (their physical, social, emotional, and functional well-being), Jennifer Beebe-Dimmer, MPH, Ph.D., of the Karmanos Cancer Institute and Wayne State University in Detroit, and her colleagues analyzed information from the Detroit Research on Cancer Survivors (Detroit ROCS) study. In this population-based study that includes African Americans diagnosed with the four most common cancers (lung, breast, prostate, and colorectal cancers), participants complete baseline and yearly follow-up surveys to update their health and health behaviors.

Among the first 1,500 participants, 60 percent reported engaging in regular physical activity, with 24 percent reporting at least 150 minutes per week. There were no differences by gender. Prostate cancer survivors were the most likely to report participating in physical activity (28 percent), while lung cancer survivors were the least likely (18 percent).

Survivors reported engaging in more physical activity at the first follow-up survey, increasing from an average of 76 minutes of moderate to [vigorous physical activity](#) at the start of the study to 110 minutes at the one-year follow-up. At the start, just one-quarter of survivors met ACS recommendations, compared with 34 percent at the one-year follow-up.

Survivors who participated in [regular physical activity](#) reported higher health-related quality of life and lower depression. Also, increases in the amount of physical activity between the start of the study and the one-year follow-up correlated with improvements in health-related quality of life.

"Identifying barriers to participation in [regular exercise](#) and developing interventions to reduce these barriers in African American cancer survivors will be critical for improving outcomes in this population and minimizing cancer health disparities," said Dr. Beebe-Dimmer.

More information: "Physical activity and quality of life in African American cancer survivors: The Detroit Research on Cancer Survivors (ROCS) Study." [DOI: 10.1002/cncr.32725](https://doi.org/10.1002/cncr.32725)

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