



Australian Haematologists' Perspectives on Exercise for Patients with Multiple Myeloma

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Introduction and Aims: Patients with multiple myeloma (MM), an incurable cancer of the plasma cells, often suffer from disease symptoms and treatment toxicities that may be alleviated through physical activity (PA). The attitudes and practices of treating physicians regarding PA participation for MM patients remains to be elucidated. This study aimed to explore the perspectives of haematologists on PA and exercise for patients diagnosed with MM.

Methods: Paper-based surveys were distributed to haematologists at Queensland hospitals. The survey included 30 questions on a 5-point Likert scale rating the importance of, or agreeance to, the benefits and barriers of PA participation, and their confidence and attitudes towards discussion of PA and exercise with MM patients.

Results: Twenty-eight haematologists (62% response rate), who cumulatively saw over 280 MM patients each week, completed the survey. The majority of respondents were male (85%), of whom 62% did not personally meet the Australian PA guidelines. Almost all respondents (96%) agreed that PA was important for MM and discussed it with their patients. Consultation time constraints were seen as a barrier to discussion by 39% of haematologists. Exercise recommendations by haematologists diverged for MM patients who were experiencing disease complications; 56% did not recommend exercise when patients had spine fractures or were physically unwell. Whilst many haematologists (64%) were not confident advising specific exercises or identifying PA resources, 39% never referred patients to exercise professionals, with a further 18% only doing so if the patient asked.

Conclusion: Haematologists perceive PA as very important for MM patients, however often do not recommend exercise for those experiencing disease complications. Further advocacy and/or clearer referral pathways are required to increase the number of MM patients being referred by their haematologists to exercise physiologists to enhance patient outcomes.