



PRIORITY AREA: CANCER SURVIVORSHIP

The ECHO Trial

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Exercise therapy is a beneficial form of adjuvant therapy following a diagnosis of cancer. Exercise has been shown to improve physical function and psychosocial wellbeing, reduce the number and severity of treatment-related side effects, assist people adhere to their chemotherapy and improve quality of life. However, it is unclear to what extent these benefits extend to women diagnosed with ovarian cancer. It is also unclear as to whether the benefits are limited to quality of life and functional outcomes, or whether it is possible that exercise therapy could also improve survival.

What is the study?

The Exercise during Chemotherapy for Ovarian cancer (ECHO) trial is a phase III, randomised controlled trial, designed to determine the effect of exercise on progression-free survival and physical well-being for patients receiving first-line chemotherapy for ovarian cancer. The study will also evaluate the effect of exercise on overall survival, physical function, body composition, quality of life, fatigue, sleep, lymphoedema, anxiety, depression, chemotherapy completion rate, chemotherapy-related adverse events, physical activity levels and healthcare use. Participants include women with newly diagnosed primary ovarian cancer, scheduled to receive first-line chemotherapy. Consenting women were randomly allocated to either the exercise intervention (plus usual care) or usual care alone. The exercise intervention involved individualised exercise prescription with a weekly target of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity, mixed-mode exercise, delivered for the duration of first-line chemotherapy through weekly telephone sessions with a trial-trained exercise professional. Findings from this trial will become available throughout and beyond 2025.

Why is this project important?

If this trial demonstrates survival benefits through adding exercise therapy to ovarian cancer treatment, findings will be used to force advancements in cancer care so that it includes exercise therapy for all. The ECHO trial will also determine the relationship between exercise dose and outcomes (e.g., quality of life, fatigue, chemotherapy compliance) and whether this relationship is influenced by patient, diagnosis, treatment and behavioural characteristics. The collection of blood samples will allow us to better understand the potential biological mechanisms through which exercise may benefit. In addition, the feasibility data will be used to assess and describe what exercise people are willing, able and interested in doing in endeavours to improve survival and/or quality of life outcomes.

