

A Closer Look at the Role of Physical Therapy and Childhood Cancer

“The National Cancer Institute identifies physical therapy as useful during treatment and as a part of follow-up care.”

The National Cancer Institute reports there are over 10 million cancer survivors in the United States. Over 270,000 of the survivors received their cancer diagnosis under the age of 21. Depending on the type of cancer and treatment, many of childhood cancer survivors experience health issues later in life that tie back to their original cancer treatment.

A study by St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital also shows childhood cancer survivors are less physically active than their siblings. One of the authors of the study, Kirsten Ness, PT, PhD, Associate Member of the [St. Jude Children’s Hospital](#) faculty makes a case for incorporating exercise during and after pediatric cancer treatment.

The research revealed childhood brain tumor cancer survivors in their 20s have physical fitness measures closer to individuals in their 60s and 70s. The cause of this is largely due to the sedentary lifestyle most children experience while undergoing cancer treatment. The inactivity puts childhood cancer survivors at a greater risk for heart disease, obesity and diabetes later in life.

Ness stresses that cancer treatment often impacts an individual’s physical function and believes physical therapists are just the experts to help individuals overcome mobility, function and other issues that arise during cancer treatment. An additional study is planned to more closely examine the benefits of exercise during treatment.

As evidence continues to grow supporting the benefits of exercise during and following cancer treatment, Ness sees the need for physical therapists in oncology growing. She stresses that physical therapists trained in oncology physical therapy need to be proactive in advising

“Physical therapy plays an important role in the treatment of pediatric cancer.”

oncologists of their services.

Educational Resources

Specialization in oncology physical therapy is currently under development by the [Oncology Section of the APTA](#). Some education programs and general information can be found on the APTA Oncology Section website (oncologypt.org). General information about pediatric cancer can also be found on the website cureforkids.org or the National Cancer Institute website cancer.gov.

To learn more about the role of physical therapy and pediatric cancer listen to a full podcast with Kirsten Ness, PT, PhD is at PTTalker.com.

Sources:

The Childhood Cancer Survivor Study: An Overview
<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/coping/ccss>

Late Effects of Childhood Cancer -
<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/pdq/treatment/lateeffects/patient>

National Cancer Institute Follow-up Care After Cancer Treatment Fact Sheet
<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Therapy/followup>



About the Author

After helping design and market the first preventative knee brace for football players as an Athletic Trainer at Iowa State University in the late 1970's, Jeff has made physical therapy equipment his passion since 1986. He launched Advantage Medical in 1994 with a commitment to help Physical Therapists and rehab professionals improve clinical outcomes as well as save time and costs through pioneering, creative solutions. Jeff's entrepreneurial approach keeps Advantage Medical and its clients at the forefront of innovations and best practices in the PT industry.

Jeff was also one of four original founders of the National Medical Alliance in 1988 which later changed its name to Motion1. He served as the Chief Operating Officer for 10 years and was instrumental in its growth and reputation as a leading supplier to independent rehabilitation distributors across the country. He is also the host of the long running podcast "PT Talker" featuring a physical therapy expert for listeners every week. Subscribe to the free, informative broadcast designed to help therapists grow their business at www.PTTalker.com

About Advantage Medical

Advantage Medical was established in 1994 to meet the growing needs of rehab professionals in a variety of medical disciplines. Advantage Medical has become a leading provider of expert advice as well as quality therapy equipment and supplies, offering innovative solutions to challenges faced by physical therapists, clinic directors, chiropractors, athlete trainers and other medical professionals.

In October of 2010, Advantage Medical joined the family of Scrip Companies of Bolingbrook, IL as an operating division. Now with access to a wider variety of products and large scale purchasing power, Advantage Medical is poised to raise the level of value we bring to our clients. Scrip Companies serves markets in massage therapy, chiropractic, spa and now physical therapy.

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