The efficacy of nutritional guidelines on survivorship post breast cancer diagnosis
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Abstract
Introduction: A diagnosis of breast cancer can be a rude awakening, urging patients to make lifestyle changes to reduce recurrence rates and extend survivorship. With the ever-growing population of breast cancer survivors there is a great need to offer clear-cut and comprehensive recommendations to obtain long-term success.

Purpose: To compare the American Cancer Society (ACS) dietary recommendations to the latest research on nutritional strategies and survivorship post breast cancer diagnosis.

Methods: PubMed and EBSCO Discovery Service were utilized to search relevant publications pertaining to breast cancer diagnosis and nutritional interventions.

Findings: The ACS guidelines are vague, yet encourage a healthy weight, increased consumption of fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and limited intake of processed and red meats. Current research has proven that body weight is correlated to greater breast cancer diagnosis and recurrence as well as reduced length of survivorship. Reducing dietary fat has shown potential in decreasing risk of relapse, while consuming high quantities of dairy fat may lead to increased risk of all-cause mortality. The benefits of adopting all ACS dietary recommendations combined on rates of survivorship and secondary cancer diagnosis have proven inconclusive, with implications that a healthy diet may be one of the key lifestyle changes towards reducing chronic diseases even though it may not prevent secondary cancer. Sadly, the majority of breast cancer survivors are not achieving these recommended guidelines and doctors are not engaging their patients accordingly.

Conclusions: The ACS nutritional guidelines are sufficient for improving overall health and weight management. Maintaining a healthy weight may help reduce the rates of secondary cancer diagnosis and positively decreases the survivor’s risk of all-cause mortality. Doctors should educate patients about the benefits of maintaining a healthy weight through proper nutrition as well as hold their patients accountable.

Obesity and Body Weight
• Excess body fat is associated with about 17% of breast cancer diagnoses (Marcel & Schub, 2015).
• Obesity is associated with an increased risk of cancer recurrence (Marcel & Schub, 2015).
• Both obesity and weight gain post breast cancer diagnosis are common and persistent problems for breast cancer survivorship.
• Both problems challenge quality and length of survivorship.

Healthy weight management should be integrated into the standard care of action for women who have breast cancer (Vaganas et al., 2015).

Nutritional Interventions
• The Women’s Intervention Nutrition Study (WINS): a randomized, prospective, multicenter clinical trial (Chlebowski, et al., 2006).
• Results indicated that an intervention of lifestyle factors such as reduction of dietary fat intake can be successfully implemented in women.
• Women in the dietary intervention group, which had reduced their fat intake at 15% of caloric intake, had a 24% lower risk of relapse than those in the control group at the 5 year follow-up.
• Intake of high fat dairy was defined as consuming two or more full servings of high fat dairy daily.
• The Women’s Healthy Eating and Living (WHEL): a randomized trial with an intervention group and a comparison group (Pettee et al., 2007).
• Among survivors of early stage breast cancer, adoption of a diet high in vegetables, fruit, and fiber and low in fat did not reduce recurrence rates nor mortality rates.
• The Nurse’s Health Study (NHS): (Kroenke, Fung, Hu, & Holmes, 2005).
• An observational study component indicated that consuming a diet high in fruits, high in whole grains and vegetables was inconclusive in lowering cancer specific mortality rates at the 7 year follow up.
• NIS did indicate that all-cause mortality by was lowered by 15%.

Clinic Visits
• Only 10% of cancer survivors report being asked about their diet and exercise at their clinic visits (Sabatino et al., 2007).
• Although there are known benefits of healthy eating for cancer survivors, it is expressed that about 50-70% of cancer survivors are not achieving the current dietary guidelines (Vijayvargia & Denlinger, 2015).

Discussion
• There is no clear evidence that expresses weight loss, survivorship, or low recurrence rates can result directly from the ACS guidelines.
• The WHEL study showed no effect on the mortality rates or the recurrence rates and the WINS study showed a 24% reduction in recurrence after lowering the dietary fat intake to only 15% of caloric intake.
• Although both studies were randomized controlled trials with low fat diets, they presented very different outcomes.
• The NHS study found that consuming a diet high in vegetables, fruit, and whole grains was inconclusive regarding lowering breast cancer mortality.
• This dietary change lowered all-cause mortality by 15%.
• These results imply that a healthy diet may be one of the key lifestyle changes towards reducing chronic diseases even though it may not prevent secondary cancer.
• The ACS nutritional guidelines provided for survivors are adequate in comparison to the recent literature that has been recently published.

Practical Implications
• If women have completed treatment are provided clear recommendations they may have a sense of direction after treatment.
• Women would be able to make educated decisions regarding diet and weight loss.
• Survivors would have the power to play an active role in obtaining longer survivorship.
• Weight loss and weight management post diagnosis of breast cancer are crucial to health and extended survivorship.
• There is a clear need for cancer survivors to implement healthy weight management into their standard cancer care and treatment plan.
• Particularly concerning the elevated obesity rates post diagnosis and advancing treatment.
• Doctors need to take responsibility for educating their patients about healthy weight management and the benefits of nutrition modifications.

Future Research Directions
• The following studies are recommended for future research regarding detailed dietary intervention post breast cancer diagnosis.
• A controlled study comparing cancer survivors who used ACS guidelines to MyPlate guidelines on the efficacy of survivorship.
• A controlled study comparing a plant based diet and a plant emphasis diet post diagnosis on the efficacy of mortality rates.
• An observational study comparing the the Women’s diet to the ACS guidelines to explore the efficacy of survivorship.

References

Methods
• Two databases were used: PubMed
• PubMed
• Study exclusion was determined by the terms: “Elderly” and “Mice”
• Search included articles written between 2005-2016

Conclusion:
• The benefits of adopting all ACS dietary recommendations combined on rates of survivorship and secondary cancer diagnosis have proven inconclusive, with implications that a healthy diet may be one of the key lifestyle changes towards reducing chronic diseases even though it may not prevent secondary cancer. Sadly, the majority of breast cancer survivors are not achieving these recommended guidelines and doctors are not engaging their patients accordingly.

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