

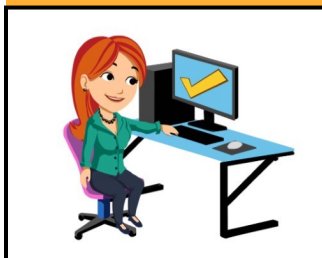
SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **AMBER Qualitative Study**
- **Investigator Achievements**

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Check out our website!



www.amberstudy.com

ISSUE 15

JANUARY 2020

Message from the Investigators

Happy 2020! We want to wish everyone a happy and prosperous New Year. We hope you were able to take some time during the holidays to relax and enjoy time with family and friends.

In this edition of the newsletter, we introduce our AMBER Qualitative Study along with profiling two participants who have recently completed their Year 1 and Year 5 follow ups. We also highlight the practice of Tai Chi as a possible therapy



for those dealing with symptoms of cancer treatment. Lastly we highlight the 2019 achievements of our principal investigators, Dr. Kerry Courneya & Dr. Christine Friedenreich.

As we reached our final recruitment of 1528 participants this past August, we now work towards completing our Year

1, Year 3 and Year 5 follow ups. To date, 1197 participants have completed their Year 1 assessment, 722 participants have completed their Year 3 assessment and 329 participants have completed their Year 5 assessment.

Thank you again for your commitment and participation! We welcome any suggestions for future newsletters!

AMBER Qualitative Study

We are looking to conduct a sub study within the AMBER Study and need your help!

Recruiting and retaining people in studies involving data collection over several years can be challenging. A deeper understanding of the experience of women participating in the AMBER Study will inform other long-term studies.

We are looking for participants who are willing to be interviewed regarding their experience of being in



the AMBER Study. The interview will be conducted on the phone and will take approximately 30-60 minutes.

The interview will be recorded so that it can be analyzed afterwards.

Your identity and the content of the interview will be kept confidential.

For more information about volunteering for this study, please contact:

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AMBER Participant Profiles

Get to know two participants in the AMBER Study!

CALGARY

We profile Kristel B. who recently completed her YR1 follow up.

Why did you decide to take part in the AMBER study?

Exercising was a big part of my life before my diagnosis. When I read about the study, it made sense to me to participate and gain more understanding about how breast cancer is or isn't impacting your life.

What was your favorite part of the testing experience?

Realizing that I was stronger than I thought.

What advice would you give to ladies newly diagnosed with breast cancer?

Join Wellspring! Wellspring has been my "home away from home" from right after my diagnosis & throughout treatment. Also,



Kristel B. completing the chest press exercise.

trust your medical team but also be an advocate for yourself, ask questions, don't rely on Google to find answers.

What is your favorite thing about living in Calgary?

Being close to the mountains and the multitude of outdoor activities. Year round I like to spend time outside, mostly walking and hiking. Once I have my energy back, I'm looking forward to downhill skiing and snowshoeing.

Is there someone you would like to thank who helped you during treatment/recovery?

We don't have family here, but I've had a whole community of friends, acquaintances and members of my fitness community pull together to help us. We've had 2 meal trains organized after both surgeries and I had enough volunteers to drive me to radiation treatments. I called them my "cheerleaders".

EDMONTON



Leah O. on her farm with her horses.

We profile Leah O. who completed her YR5 follow up in Edmonton.

Why did you decide to take part in the AMBER study?

I felt it was a responsibility to help others in any way I could. Plus, it was a way to take a positive step forward to improve my physical health.

What kept you motivated during your treatment?

My treatment plan was constantly changing since my cancer was found during a breast reduction.

Prior to my diagnosis I had started yoga and meditation which I continued during my

treatment. It helped me stay calm and focused, as well as loving my body during and after all my surgeries (7 total).

One of my goals was to take yoga teacher training once my treatments were complete. In 2017, I became a certified yoga teacher and I hope to work with cancer patients in the future showing them the power of the mind-body connection.

What advice would you give to ladies newly diagnosed with breast cancer?

Every person's cancer journey is different. Remember to be kind to yourself by resting when you need to or saying no to commitments and

enjoy the simple moments in a day.

A quote that spoke to you during your cancer journey.

This quote helped me during treatment and I have it posted in my office at work:

"She stood in the storm and when the wind did not blow her way, she adjusted her sails."

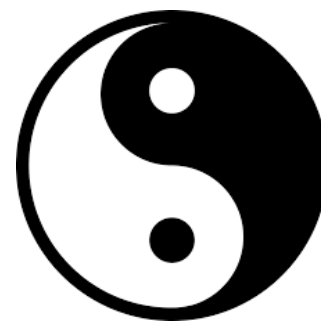
- Elizabeth Edwards

Tai Chi & Cancer

Tai Chi is gaining interest in the health and fitness community as an alternative method of exercise and mindfulness. Tai Chi originated over 3,000 years ago in ancient China and combines movement of the mind and the body.

Sessions tend to run about one hour and involve executing an unbroken flow of slow and controlled movements of the torso and limbs. The meditative and intentional approach of Tai Chi integrates mental concentration and breathing control. Although the main focus is mindfulness, Tai Chi also trains postural muscles, core strength, and balance.

Modernized versions of Tai Chi incorporate some of the ancient practices with new research in the field of medicine in an effort to optimize the effectiveness of this training method for both clinical and general populations. Those who practice Tai Chi on a regular basis will proclaim its health benefits both physical and psychological and it has been shown to lower blood pressure, lessen stiffness and pain and improve sleep quality.



The low intensity of the movements make it an accessible form of exercise for those undergoing or recovering from cancer treatment. As well, research examining the practice of Tai Chi with cancer survivors has suggested positive outcomes.

Specifically in post-treatment breast cancer survivors, a few studies have shown that Tai Chi can help to improve anxiety, depression, fatigue, health related quality of life and sleep disturbance along with physical function.

As well, related to breast cancer recovery post treatment, a few studies have examined the effects of Tai Chi on shoulder flexibility. Results have shown that participants completing a Tai Chi intervention demonstrated a greater increase in flexibility of shoulder range of motion compared to a control group.

Due to the group nature of Tai Chi, a commonly reported outcome from participants in these type of studies is also improved social well-being. This can be described as high quality social interactions or a feeling of social connection.

There are a number of facilities and clubs in both Edmonton and Calgary that offer classes for newcomers, including the YMCA and Wellspring Calgary and Edmonton.

If you are looking for an introduction to Tai Chi, check out the instructional video posted on the Wellspring website!

<https://wellspring.ca/online-resources/coping-skills/tai-chi-2/>



Investigator Achievements

Dr. Kerry Courneya and Dr. Christine Friedenreich are the principal investigators for the AMBER Study. Over their careers they have conducted more than 40 studies working towards developing a framework for physical activity related to cancer prevention and survival. In this past year, they have both received awards acknowledging the contributions they have brought to the field.

In April 2019, Dr. Kerry Courneya was awarded the 2019 Manulife Prize for the Promotion of Active Health. This award was established to recognize researchers whose work is advancing understandings of how physical activity, nutrition or psychosocial factors influence personal health and wellbeing. Further information on Dr. Courneya's research and the award can be found here: <https://www.mcgill.ca/manulife-prize/prize/2019-winner>



In November 2019, Dr. Christine Friedenreich was named a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in the Life Sciences Division of the Academy of Science. This award is one of the highest achievements that an academic can be awarded for their contribution to the research field. The induction took place in Ottawa and was part of the Celebration of Excellence Event held over four days that highlighted outstanding achievements from academics across Canada in all disciplines of humanities, social science and science. A short video about Dr. Friedenreich's research can be found here:

<https://ucalgary.ca/news/christine-friedenreich-shares-what-inspires-her-about-her-trailblazing-cancer-research>



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