

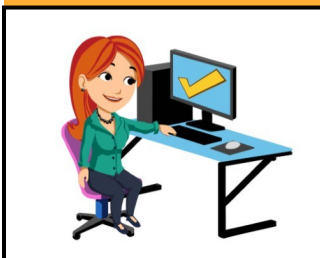
## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

**Exciting Updates for  
the Study!**

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<b>Year 5 Participant Profiles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Recent Baseline Paper</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Unhalted Hope</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Contact Information</b>	<b>4</b>

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website!**



[www.amberstudy.com](http://www.amberstudy.com)

## Message from the Investigators

Summer is here! Hope you are enjoying the warm weather!

In this edition of the newsletter, we highlight the next baseline paper which was recently published! We also hear from two participants who recently completed the Year 5 follow-up.

Lastly, we profile Unhalted Hope, an Equine Assisted learning program



that can help a person overcome personal obstacles.

In this next year, we look towards completing all data collection for the study. In total, 1353 participants completed the Year 1 assessment and

1174 participants completed the Year 3 assessment. To date, 866 participants have completed the Year 5 assessment.

Thank you again for your participation and commitment to the study!

We hope you have a great summer and that you can enjoy some time with family and friends.

## New Milestone Reached and Grant Success!

The big news since the last newsletter is that we have completed all Year 3 follow-ups and fitness testing for the study! Although we are excited to reach this point in the study, we will miss seeing our lovely participants in person.

We are so grateful to all participants in the study as we couldn't do this research with out you!

The next goal will be working towards completing the Year 5 follow-ups which is the



last time point for data collection in this study.

Over the last year, we have published three baseline papers and have three more pending. The most recent paper examined the health-related fitness data and quality of life. See page 3 for more details!

Next, we will be focusing on analyzing the baseline and Year 1 data to look at changes over time.

Lastly, we are thrilled to announce that our recent grant application was successful and we have received additional funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research! This funding will allow us to finish off the Year 5 follow-ups, analyze the blood samples, and continue the further analyses at each time point.

# AMBER Participants

Hear from two participants who completed the YR5 follow-up!

## CALGARY

### What were you hoping to gain from participating in the study?

I was interested in participating in the AMBER study so I could see the changes in my body from treatment and provide information that could potentially make someone else's journey a little bit easier based on the study results.

### What has been a highlight of participating in the study?

Receiving my results from the exercise testing

and learning that my strength and flexibility had improved through my participation in a group exercise program called ACE.

### Have you made any life-style changes after receiving the results of your AMBER study testing?

I have! I now exercise two times per week with a personal trainer and walk daily. I also drink more water and get eight hours of sleep.

### What motivates you to be physically active?

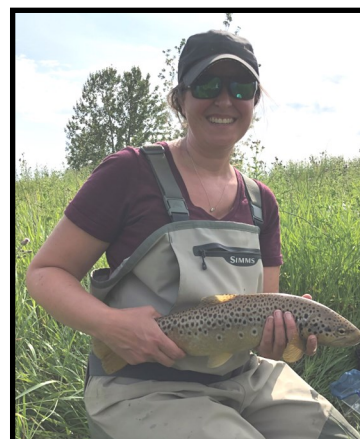
My dog! If she does not get her walks, she will bug me until she does.

### Are there any programs/resources/websites you found helpful after your cancer diagnosis?

The Alberta Cancer Exercise (ACE) Program run through the University of Calgary, Health and Wellness Lab was amazing. I highly recommend that anyone going through treatment participate in the program.

### What are your perspective/thoughts 5 years post diagnosis?

Life is short. Do the things you enjoy. Work will be there tomorrow.



Calgary Participant  
Amber L.

## EDMONTON



Edmonton participant  
Jodi C. with her dog  
Mandy

### What were you hoping to gain from participating in the study?

I felt the study would offer me some awareness of how going through breast cancer treatments affected me and my body. Also, it was a way to help other cancer survivors and contribute back to research.

### Have you made any life-style changes after receiving the results of your AMBER study testing?

To be honest, I haven't made as many changes as I would have liked, not from lack of trying! I feel the results have definitely made

me more aware that I need to stay physically active.

### What are your perspective/thoughts 5 years post diagnosis?

Five year anniversary! I feel very blessed because I'm here. Having cancer did not change the way I live or my family or friends. Cancer has made us all more aware to not take things and life for granted. I also feel blessed because my journey was successful. It was manageable and I never felt sick. I recovered well and lead a pretty normal life.

### Is there anything else you would like to share about your breast cancer experience?

I could probably write a book about different experiences, some good, some bad, some funny and some sad but I'm here. My life is pretty normal and I am surrounded by loved ones.

Believe in yourself, look after yourself. It's okay to not be okay some days. It's been five years and I still miss having two breasts. It takes a lot of time to get used to and I maybe never will. I am grateful to have been around caring people.

## New AMBER Baseline Paper!



The most recent baseline paper examined the relationship between health-related fitness (HRF) and quality of life (QoL) in newly diagnosed breast cancer patients. To date, it is one of the largest and most comprehensive assessments of HRF and QoL in any cancer group. Health-related fitness assessments included cardiorespiratory fitness, muscular fitness, and body composition. QoL was assessed using questionnaire data looking at physical QoL (general physical health, bodily pain, physical functioning & work limitations) & mental QoL (general mental health, energy levels, & social functioning).

After analyzing the data from 1458 participants, we found the following results:

- ✓ Lower HRF was related to a higher risk of poor/fair physical QoL.
- ✓ Upper body muscular fitness had the strongest relationship with physical QoL. Participants unable to achieve a maximal strength score were almost 5x more likely to report poor/fair physical QoL.
- ✓ HRF as measured was not related to mental QoL. This result suggests that having better health-related fitness did not help to buffer the mental distress of a new diagnosis, surgical recovery, and pending/initiating treatments.



The novel finding of this paper is that each of the three measures of HRF (cardiorespiratory fitness, muscular fitness, and body composition) were directly related to physical QoL, which has not been seen in previous studies. Designing exercise interventions to improve these components of HRF may optimize physical QoL and help newly diagnosed breast cancer patients better prepare for treatments and recovery.

A full copy of the paper can be found on our website - [click here](#)

## AMBER Investigator - Dr. Kerry Courneya

Dr. Kerry Courneya is a Professor & Canada Research Chair in Physical Activity & Cancer in the Faculty of Kinesiology, Sport & Recreation at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. He is also the director of the Behavioral Medicine Laboratory & Fitness Centre and he developed the idea for the AMBER study.

Dr. Courneya has extensive experience in the field, conducting over 50 exercise trials in cancer patients, & co-leading two large multidimensional Phase III randomized controlled trials in exercise oncology: the Colon Health And Life-Long Exercise chaNGE (CHALLENGE) Clinical Trial & the INTense ExeRcise for surviVAL Among Men With Metastatic Prostate Cancer (INTERVAL-GAP4).

Over his 30-year career, Dr. Courneya has contributed to advances in the field through more than 540 publications. His efforts have positively impacted the lives of many cancer patients & inspired researchers around the world!



As recognition of his career work in exercise oncology, Dr. Courneya was recently appointed to the Order of Canada, which recognizes people across all sectors of society who have made extraordinary & sustained contributions to our nation. Congratulations to Dr. Courneya for receiving this honour!



# Unhalted Hope: Equine Assisted Learning

Unhalted Hope opened in 2022 with a mission to provide a sense of hope, particularly to those impacted by chronic illness or loss, through gentle interaction with horses using Equine Assisted Learning (EAL). It is run by Kristel Boon, a breast cancer survivor who has experienced her own healing and transformation working with horses and becoming an EAL facilitator.

EAL is an experiential way of growing and overcoming personal obstacles through gentle guidance and interaction with horses. Participants engage in objective-oriented exercises and find themselves learning valuable life lessons and skills in the positive, affirming company of horses.

- Experiential learning is a form of hands-on learning
- You work with a horse without riding it; all the work is done on the ground, while leading the horse.
- Typically you form a team of two or three humans and one horse.
- Your horse is an integral part of the team and through the work you do with and in your team you will learn or re-learn valuable life lessons.
- Some of those life lessons or life skills include: building healthy relationships, gaining self confidence, or refining communication skills.



**EAL Facilitator  
Kristel Boon**

EAL is not therapy, and is not to be confused with Equine Assisted Therapy; however, it has therapeutic benefits as horses are extremely intuitive animals and have the extraordinary ability to read a person's non-verbal communication. Horses don't know or care about one's personal history or background. They experience us 'in the moment' and this is where a person can learn to be in the same moment with them. While a horse is a big animal, it is a prey animal and needs to feel safe. If we can be the gentle leader that can provide them that safety, we are creating a truly unique bond.



If you're open to new experiences, Equine Assisted Learning can help you discover a new path forward with the help of horses.

*"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step" ~ Lao Tzu*

**For more information:**

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