
Exercise could do as much good as chemo: doctors

27th July 2006, 14:00 WST

Exercise after a cancer diagnosis could be as effective as chemotherapy in helping people survive, according to researchers.

Doctors in the United States have found that regular exercise can more than double the chances of people beating diseases such as bowel cancer.

This added to earlier studies which found physical activity could help the recovery prospects of women with breast cancer.

Australian cancer experts said the US research added to the growing evidence that exercise could not only help prevent cancer from occurring in the first place but could also reduce the likelihood of the disease returning in people who had already been diagnosed and treated.

Last month, Melbourne researchers said they believed exercise slowed cancer by boosting a protein in the body which killed off dangerous cancer cells that could multiply out of control.

The two latest studies, reported in the Journal of Clinical Oncology, found that early and advanced bowel cancer patients who did regular exercise for six to 12 months after their treatment ended were more likely to survive.

The results were based on patients doing moderate physical activity, the equivalent of six hours of walking a week.

This week's edition of the doctors' magazine Medical Observer said the bowel cancer findings confirmed similar findings for breast cancer patients.

This suggested exercise was likely to have a benefit for patients with all types of cancer.

Cancer Council Australia welcomed the findings.

It said the growing evidence about the benefits of exercise in cancer prevention suggested the benefits could be as significant as those from drug therapy.



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