

# HEALTH-PROMOTING LIFESTYLE OF CANCER SURVIVORS

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**ABSTRACT:** *This is a descriptive survey design study that determined the health-promoting lifestyle characteristics of cancer survivors. Findings revealed that the level of the health-promoting lifestyle of cancer survivors in terms of spiritual growth, interpersonal relations, nutrition, physical activity, and stress management are good. However, for health responsibility, it is only fair. However, some factors could either influence positively or hinder the health-promoting lifestyle of the participants. The findings of the study demonstrate that health promotion and lifestyle can improve the overall health and quality of life of cancer survivors. It means that they have to engage in HP behaviors that may also lessen the impact of cancer on health status. Health promotion efforts could address cancer prevention by focusing on cancer screening programs, community-clinical linkages, cancer risk factors such as lifestyle change, and increased physical activity that also influences risk for other chronic diseases. Some efforts focus specifically on cancer t while other programs focus on general chronic disease prevention.*

**Keywords:** health promotion, spiritual growth, interpersonal relations, physical activity, health responsibility

## INTRODUCTION

Modern science has eliminated the threat of death from most infectious diseases. However, there are currently too many people dying young from non-communicable diseases like heart diseases and cancer. The main influential factor for this epidemiological transition is a change in people's lifestyle toward unhealthy practices. It means that death from lifestyle diseases like hypertension, diabetes, and cancer are now the primary causes of death.

The term lifestyle also shows an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and, necessarily, how this person perceived other individuals and, at times, also how others perceive him or her.

In most of these lifestyle diseases, the outset is subtle and usually after 30 years. By the time interventions are prepared and implemented, the impairment to health has already occurred. Health-promoting lifestyles are multidimensional since it involves various characteristics of an individual's daily lifestyles [1].

One of these lifestyle diseases which preventable are cancer. Currently, there are about 25 million cancer survivors. Cancer can spread or metastasize in the body in various ways. The possibility of this occurring and continuing follow-up. Testing brings a degree of uncertainty related to the healing process that is not necessarily a part of other disease trajectories.

In recent years, lifestyle changes and urbanism have resulted in the increased prevalence of different cancer types. However, they are at increased risk for second cancers and other comorbidities such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and functional decline.

Many cancer survivors experience physical and psychosocial side effects, which can be severe, debilitating, and sometimes permanent. That is why understanding their health-promoting behavior, and lifestyle characteristics could help develop a health promotion program for these survivors.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Health is a crucial issue among Filipinos, as each one strongly values their health and well-being. However, many have paid no attention to the countless choices confronting them about how they live, work, and play, potentially affecting their bodies and minds or even costing their lives. Often, when people are sick, injured, disabled, or faced with

the potential loss of productivity, well-being, or life itself, they truly recognize the importance of health. However, health care is never without personal expenses, particularly in a third-world country where the means of paying for health services is from the personal pockets of the patients [2].

Although Filipinos are becoming more aware that some aspects of modern lifestyle may be detrimental to their health, it is also becoming difficult for more people to make healthy choices due to their living conditions and socio-economic situations. The changes in family structures and lifestyle trends in the Philippines have made considerable changes in their health profiles. As a result, more people are currently suffering and dying from costly chronic degenerative diseases, and the national government is expected to shoulder ballooning expenses for healthcare over the years. A considerable portion of the gross domestic product is spent on health for costly care if nothing is done. The Universal Health Care (UHC) Bill guarantees all Filipinos accessibility to affordable and quality promotive and preventive, including rehabilitative health services is a priority bill of President Rodrigo Duterte.

WHO defined health promotion as the procedure of enabling people to heighten control over and improve their health. It advocates a health-enabling environment that encourages individuals to practice healthy lifestyles by improving their lives and preventing diseases and injuries.

Many studies have shown a positive relationship between health-promoting lifestyle and quality of life.

A study found a positive correlation between health-promoting lifestyle and quality of life in 91 older adults aged 60-92 years [3].

A review of the literature was conducted and found out that no study that assessed the physical activities and behavior of Hong Kong Chinese childhood cancer survivors, how cancer and its treatment affect the physical activity, and other behavior of these children remains unclear. There was a remarkable decrease in the levels of physical activity of childhood cancer survivors. However, most of them do not perform physical exercise. Issues about academic performance, fatigue, and decreased physical strength and endurance after remission prevented them from engaging in regular physical activity. This study shows that many childhood cancer survivors did not engage in regular physical activity and underestimated its importance [4].

An assessment was conducted to determine whether Indonesian women with breast cancer have a higher external health locus of control (HLC) than healthy women and explored the association between HLC and symptoms of anxiety and depression. Women with breast cancer had greater scores on all external HLC subscales, such as chance, doctor, others, and God, and lower internal HLC than healthy women. In addition, there was a relationship between High God LHC scores and a high level of anxiety, whereas no association exists between HLC subscales and depression. Results suggested that women with breast cancer tend to have high external HLC, while healthy women tend to have high internal HLC [5]. Therefore, a firm believes in an external control source, such as a negative association between God and patients' emotional adjustment.

In the Philippines, a study was done to determine the level of knowledge about breast cancer and health-seeking lifestyles of breast cancer survivors in Iloilo City, Philippines. Findings revealed that breast cancer survivors were knowledgeable about breast cancer, and they practiced correct health-seeking behaviors. The level of knowledge in the rehabilitative aspect seemed to influence their curative health-seeking behavior. The results still highlight the importance of further education to improve the knowledge about breast cancer in the promotive, preventive, and curative aspects and the health-seeking practices of breast cancer survivors [6].

#### METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a descriptive quantitative design to determine the health-promoting lifestyle of cancer survivors. One hundred eighty (180) cancer survivors participated in this study following these inclusion criteria: cancer survivors, ages 18 to 65 years of age, doing consultations with a medical oncologist, and willing to be a participant in the study. It utilized a standardized Health Promotion Lifestyle tool [7]. All the instruments were translated to Filipino since most people could understand and read using this language. Ethics review committee clearance was granted from St. Paul University Philippines, Tuguegarao City, Cagayan.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data reveal that spiritual growth has the highest mean of 2.57, followed by nutrition with 2.54, then interpersonal relations with 2.42. These three domains got good descriptions. Health responsibility obtained the lowest mean of 2.26.

**Table 1: Level of Health Promoting Lifestyle of Cancer Survivors**

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
Spiritual Growth	2.57	Good
Interpersonal Relations	2.42	Good
Nutrition	2.54	Good
Physical Activity	2.39	Good
Health Responsibility	2.26	Fair
Stress Management	2.34	Good
General Mean Category	2.42	Good

Cancer is a life-threatening disease and dramatically affects the patient's physical, mental, and social aspects. Acceptance of illness can reduce the negative emotions

associated with the disease and its complications thus could help to enhance a patient's quality of life [8].

It could be speculated that people attempt to adjust to a higher health-promoting lifestyle after cancer detection [9]. When each domain of health-promoting behaviors was compared, the score of spiritual growth was the highest among the six domains in the current study. It is consistent with the work of [10] in the U.S among breast cancer survivors, which indicated the score of self-actualization was the highest.

The study showed that health responsibility had a strong connection with nutrition and physical activity [11]. It means that the higher the health responsibility is among cancer patients and survivors, the better the physical activity and nutrition habits. Thus, it can be said that developing and implementing goal-oriented programs to promote health responsibility and stress management may encourage physical activity and nutritional behaviors among cancer patients and survivors.

The health promotion lifestyle of cancer survivors can be improved if family support is improved and there is a decrease in distress. Therefore, a nursing intervention program leading to the improvement of family support and reducing the anguish of breast cancer survivors is needed to enhance the health promotion behavior as espoused in the different studies mentioned.

The health-promoting lifestyle characteristics mentioned are spiritual growth, interpersonal relations, nutrition, physical activity, health responsibility, and stress management based on its theoretical framework as the basis of the study. In addition, these characteristics are influenced by other external factors such as smoking, unhealthy diet, lack of exercise or physical inactivity, infections, and late-stage diagnosis due to lack of knowledge or understanding about cancer.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The level of the health-promoting lifestyle of cancer survivors in terms of spiritual growth, interpersonal relations, nutrition, physical activity, health responsibility, and stress management is relatively good. However, some factors could either influence positively or hinder the health-promoting lifestyle of the participants.

The study's findings demonstrate that health promotion and lifestyle can improve the overall health and quality of life of cancer survivors. It means that they have to engage in HP behaviors that may also lessen the impact of cancer on health status.

Health promotion efforts could address cancer prevention by focusing on cancer screening programs, community-clinical linkages, cancer risk factors such as lifestyle change, and increased physical activity that also influences risk for other chronic diseases. Some efforts focus specifically on cancer while other programs focus on general chronic disease prevention.

From the findings of the study, it is suggested that:

Local Government Units/National Government Units should give provisions to NGOs and GOs, which supports cancer survivors in their locality.

The Department of Health/City Health Office should provide a cancer screening program at the community level, even at the workplace, to encourage people to consider cancer

screening.

Nurse Educators should not only promote cancer patients' lifestyles but can start with their students' lifestyles. Nurse educators need to pay closer attention to their students' eating habits, physical activity, social support, stress management skills, life appreciation, and health responsibility. Integrate lifestyle change behavior into their classroom teachings for easier understanding.

Health providers (nurses and doctors) should actively support that HP behaviors can reduce cancer's impact on health and improve their QOL. For example, the rate of cancer survivors continuously increases the issues in cancer survivorship and health-related quality of life, and the concept of health promotion for people with cancer.

Health professionals should provide care for persons facing a cancer diagnosis and stressful cancer treatment; therefore, nursing intervention should focus on developing patients' skills for coping with cancer and its treatment and their skills for adapting to a chronic illness.

Nurses should create a support group to identify unmet psychosocial needs for individuals facing cancer diagnosis and treatment. Significantly, nurses should promote cancer support group participation **to change** health-promoting behaviors for patients as a crucial part of their nursing care.

Future researchers can conduct a comparative study using different support group techniques to determine the most effective health promotion support group intervention for increased engagement in HP behaviors and improved overall well-being with breast cancer during and following treatment.

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