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ORIGINAL RESEARCH: FEATURED ABSTRACT FROM THE
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Using Exercise for Risk Reduction in African American Breast Cancer Survivors: A Community-based Pilot Study

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PEER REVIEWED

The objective of this study was to pilot test a low-impact exercise program, *Walking Counts!*, for its effect on steps walked per day and body mass index (BMI) in a population of African American breast cancer survivors.

The Massey Cancer Center in Richmond, Va, partnered with community centers to offer a walking intervention, designed by the study's primary investigator, to high-risk breast cancer survivors. More than 60% of women report weight gain after breast cancer diagnosis, increasing their risk of cancer recurrence and other co-morbidities. Few studies have tested cognitive/behavioral healthy lifestyle interventions in cancer survivors. This study was designed to measure the impact of *Walking Counts!* on steps per day, BMI, and related measures by providing skills, knowledge, and self-assessment for African American women who have had breast cancer.

An 8-week intervention was held at community locations for African American breast cancer survivors (n = 23) aged 30 to 70 years. Pedometers, a walking scheduler/tracker, and informational/motivational sessions were provided to participants to help them achieve 10,000 steps per day. Data were collected at 3 points to examine

changes in walking; BMI; body fat percentage; waist, hip, and forearm circumferences; attitudes toward exercise; cancer stress; and related demographic measures.

Pre- and post-intervention impact included statistically significant increases in steps per day ($P = .001$), as well as decreases in BMI ($P = .004$), body weight ($P = .006$), percent body fat ($P = .002$), and waist ($P = .035$) and forearm ($P = .005$) circumferences. Increased positive perception of exercising was also reported. Follow-up data, including 3-month post-intervention data, will be presented to identify characteristics related to successful outcomes.

Increasing walking for exercise, without making other changes, can improve attitudes and anthropometric measures, which may help reduce risk of cancer recurrence. The high retention rate (95%), along with positive study outcomes, indicate that breast cancer survivors are motivated to improve their health habits.

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