

# Newsletter

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## Cognitive Impairments & Cancer

An increasing number of Canadians are living with late and long-term side effects of cancer treatment. Of these side effects, cognitive impairment, often termed *chemobrain* or *brain fog*, has been reported in a substantial number of cancer survivors. Those experiencing cognitive impairment report trouble with their focus (including concentration and attention abilities), short term memory, word finding, and multi-tasking. Luckily, interventions

exist to assist those experiencing such impairments. There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating that exercise, whether it be individually motivated or as part of a structured program, plays an important role in reducing cognitive impairments in cancer survivors. Aerobic activity (i.e. walking, jogging, biking), resistance (i.e. weight lifting), meditative (i.e. yoga, qigong, tai chi), and mixed forms of exercise may all lead to improvements in cancer survivors' cognition. Such exercise improves neuroplasticity, leading to more (and healthier) brain cells, and can have a protective effect on certain regions of the brain involved

## Research Profile: Joy's Masters Project

Since Canadian cancer statistics are not yet stratified by ethnicity/race, the extent of a cancer burden among African, Black and/or Caribbean (ABC) descent is not well understood. However, data from the United States demonstrates that those of ABC descent are disproportionately affected by the disease and have the highest death and the lowest survival rates of any racial or ethnic group for most cancers. Physical activity/exercise has demonstrated a multitude of health benefits (improved quality life, decrease risk of recurrence and mortality) during and beyond cancer treatment, yet there is an underrepresentation of ABC cancer survivors in clinic and exercise trials. The aim of my master's researcher project is to explore the preferences, barriers and facilitators to exercise in cancer patients and survivors of ABC descent in Nova Scotia. For more information contact Joy at [joy.chiekwe@dal.ca](mailto:joy.chiekwe@dal.ca)

## PAC Wellness Champion

How fortunate I was when my daughter heard, on the radio, information about the ACCESS program and told me about it. Soon thereafter I was accepted into it. Following breast cancer diagnosis, surgery, chemo and radiation treatments, I had realized a marked decline in energy & overwhelming fatigue; this seemed to be just what this 71 year old needed. There was a bit of trepidation joining this Zoom program but I immediately felt welcomed & from the first meeting /assessment I have been looking forward to our Tuesday and Thursday sessions weekly, Exercise with Joy I call it. (Joy is an amazing instructor!) Actually, the emails that we receive the day before, give us an opportunity to see what the next day will bring & give us a look at the exercises which we will be doing. The classes are so well organized and carried out. The 15 minutes before and after the actual class gives us clarification & additional instruction, if needed. The actual classes give instructions for us at all levels. Invited to do what we can, with exercises at various levels, progressively more difficult, we are encouraged to challenge ourselves. Lectures on a variety of topics prove motivational and educational. This program has my gratitude. Through it, I am experiencing lessening of fatigue, increasing energy. My days are much brighter. My life is much better. I highly recommend this to all. The many benefits make it worthwhile. The maintenance part of the program will definitely be welcomed by me. Thank you.



## Meet our Team



Mohsen is in his first year of Dalhousie's MSc. program, researching the health outcomes of resistance-based exercise for brain cancer survivors. He will be working with patients to understand the health-related outcomes of a resistance-based exercise. He believes physical activity could drastically improve their overall quality of life. He aims to help make exercise accessible so that everyone can benefit from an active lifestyle.

Life happens! It is important to recognize what your schedule entails daily, weekly and monthly so you can incorporate exercise into your routine! Make exercise an important part of your day, meaning with important activities you schedule them in so you don't forget! Maybe take some time at the start of your week to look at your daily tasks and see when you can exercise. Make a routine of it, maybe every morning or evening you go for your walk. Scheduling in a class can also increase motivation to make sure you are there! It is important to understand whatever works for you!



For more tips on finding ways to exercise on the road visit the ACSM guide at [https://www.acsm.org/read-research/resource-library/resource\\_detail?id=84509e64-bcd5-4a16-9f9f-17109ca5f433](https://www.acsm.org/read-research/resource-library/resource_detail?id=84509e64-bcd5-4a16-9f9f-17109ca5f433)