

'An Exploratory Study of Experiences and Perceptions of Patients with Breast Cancer Who Have Undertaken a 2-Day Retreat'

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INTRODUCTION:

In the UK 1 in 8 persons are diagnosed with breast cancer every 10 minutes (Breast Cancer Care, 2019).

Over the past 10 years survival rate has increased by 75% yet numerous challenges are encountered daily such as fatigue, physical deconditioning, lack of motivation, lowered self-esteem and many more (Hoffman *et al.*, 2007; Spector *et al.*, 2012; Gho *et al.*, 2014).

Numerous benefits are linked to Physical Activity (PA) and Breast cancer survivors. (Culos-Reed *et al.*, 2012; Greenlee *et al.*, 2014; Hack *et al.*, 2010). More specifically, Nordic Walking and Yoga have displayed positive outcomes amongst breast cancer survivors such as improved quality of life, increased range of motion as well as combatting fatigue (Aerts *et al.*, 2011; Jönson and Johanson, 2014; Speed-Andrews *et al.*, 2014).

In 2016 a 2-Day stayover retreat offering a range of activities was set up in the North West of England for Primary and Secondary breast cancer survivors.

The retreat incorporated the specific activities aforementioned as well as providing a networking platform via a number of social media networks for participants to interact with one and other. An intervention shown to enhance empowerment amongst survivors (Bantum *et al.*, 2014).

CURRENT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES:

150 minutes moderate activity OR 75 minutes vigorous activity ≥ 5 d/wk. With ≥ 2 d/wk focusing on strength exercise. (Public Health England, 2019)



ESMO (2019): Follow up, long term implications and Survivorship Recommendations: "Patients should be encouraged towards adopting a healthy lifestyle, including diet modification and exercise" No FITT principles provided as a recommendation for patients.

Based on small Randomised Control Trials with substantial clinical benefit (number of RCTs not provided).



Macmillan (2018): Follow the guided recommendation provided by NICE: 150 minutes moderate or 75 minutes vigorous activity a week aiming to achieve 2 days strength training.

Based on 7 x Randomised Control Trials



ACSI/ ACSO (2016): Recommendation 4.3: Avoid physical inactivity, aim for 150 minutes moderate or 75 minutes vigorous activity a week aiming to achieve 2 days strength training emphasising strength training for women treated with adjuvant chemotherapy or hormone therapy.

Based on 2 x Randomised Control Trials, 1 x Case Control study/ Prospective Cohort study.



CURRENT CLINICAL SERVICE:

Within the UK, Breast Cancer Care and the NHS run in partnership a 'Moving Forward Course' (Breast Cancer Care, 2019).



Moving Forward Course



3-4 week course (compulsory half day session).



Primary breast cancer patients only who have finished their hospital based treatments.



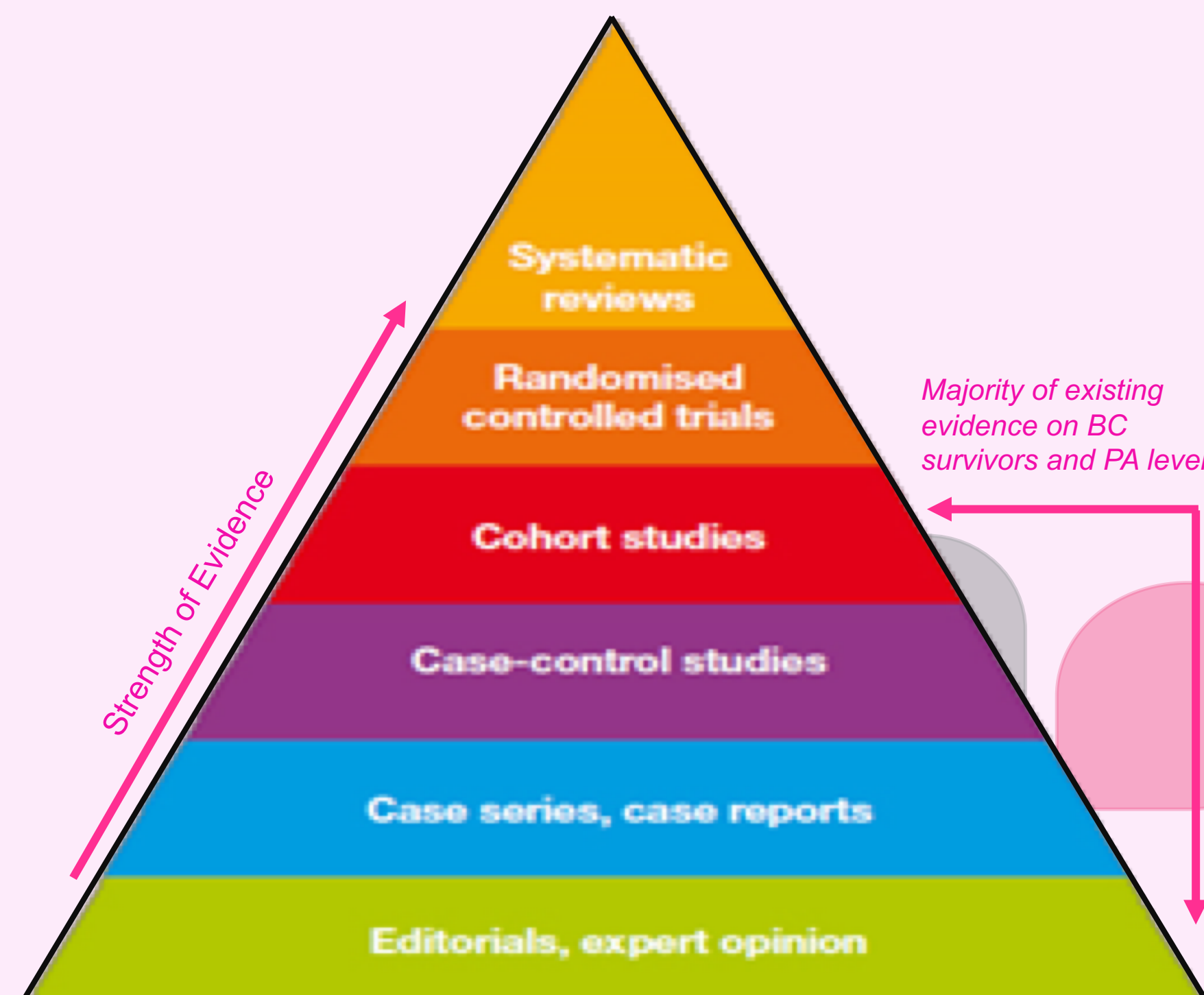
Aim to provide information on nutrition, exercise, cancer fatigue etc.



Courses run every 4 months in selected areas around the UK.



HEIREACHY OF RESEARCH EVIDENCE:



PRESENT STUDY:

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of a 2-day stay-over retreat incorporating a variety of physical activities and social media support networks for survivors. The study investigated how this affects survivors' PA and adherence levels using an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach.

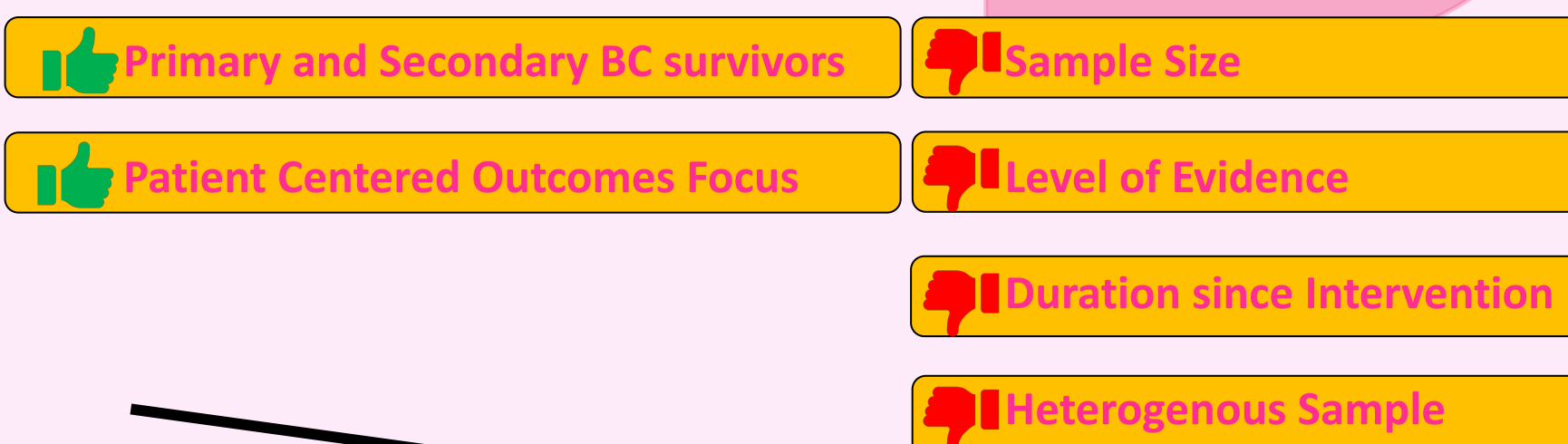
METHODS:

Data was collected via digital recordings amongst 3 independent focus groups made up of 19 Primary and Secondary breast cancer survivors whom had attended one ABCD retreat in the North West of England (Mean age 48.8 SD = 8.8±).

Data was transcribed verbatim then analysed using an IPA analysis framework following Cook and Braun (2006).

Data was finally verified by an independent researcher and randomly selected participants to ensure agreement of themes amongst all parties.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS:



RESULTS:

5 Key themes emerged from the data:

Access To Essential Information:

"I can easily describe the information I received on physical activity recommendations... None. None whatsoever from all the healthcare professionals I saw..." "If it wasn't for social media I would never have heard about the retreat. All the support I had post diagnosis has all been through social media. So its been vitally important to me." [P8]

Increased Physical Activity Levels:

"I went on the retreat during chemo and started exercising again with jogging and running... as a result I ran through my last two chemo treatments!" [P3]



A Change in Attitude: Motivation To Continue Exercise:

"To stay as healthy as possible and to still be here in the next 10 -15 years. I know I'm not daft enough to think it won't come back and if I can keep that period of time between when it does come back as long as possible then you know that's my motivation for staying healthy." [P1]



Invaluable Peer Support Network:

"The retreat went above what I expected, and it was the ability to spend time with women similar to me... I know as a previous Oncology nurse I've kind of not attached or interacted with other people... I've struggled to be 'the patient'. But after taking part I felt the blinkers had fallen off and that throughout my cancer journey the retreat has probably been the most positive experience and even now I'm still in contact with the other women and I'm still reaping the benefits". [P9]



Improved Mental Well Being:

"For me it's the mental part of it, and I think even if I was shown this before my diagnosis I think it would've been so useful because my life is always very busy and stressful and part of the stress is probably only what I make of it. I think you just need that outlet to get out and get away from everything and getting out and breathe and getting sweaty, I don't know it makes you feel like you've achieved something... gives you a buzz." [P5]

IMPACT ON PRACTICE:

- ★ Encouragement of primary and secondary patients participating in the same physical activity groups.
- ★ Recommendations to NHS and charity based trusts on the benefits of such interventions for breast cancer survivors.
- ★ Importance of social networking amongst breast cancer patients and the support platform it creates as well as access to further information during and after treatment.

FUTURE RESEARCH:

- ★ A longitudinal study following participants who participated in a retreat to measure the improvements on side effects.
- ★ Investigation into a retreat intervention with males, in the UK, over 300 men are diagnosed with breast cancer a year (NICE, 2018).
- ★ Studies investigating the adherence and activity levels of other types of cancer survivors e.g. Prostate.

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