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Title: The feasibility of a targeted intervention to improve treatment related side-effects in patients with head and neck cancer in the early survivorship phase

Body: Background

This study evaluates the feasibility of providing an education-based rehabilitation intervention targeting physical function in the acute surgical setting for patients with head and neck cancer.

Methods

This single arm prospective feasibility study involved the provision of an exercise booklet and a once-off standardized treatment session 4-6 weeks post-operatively. Outcomes collected prior to surgery (T1) and 16-18 weeks post-surgery (T2) included lymphoedema screening questions, 30 second sit to stand test, upper limb function, quality of Life, and physical activity.

Results

Participants (n=26) were 42% male, with a mean of 65.96 years (SD 8.99, range 44-80). Tongue cancer (n=10, 38%) was most prevalent type of HNC. A greater number of patients had positive subjective signs of lymphoedema at T2 (0%, T1 vs 46%, T2, p= 0.000512). The median DASH score of participants at T1 was significantly lower than scores at T2 (p=0.000488). There was no change to physical function or quality of life (p>0.05) between T1 and T2. In total 88% of participants (n=23) reported use of the booklet in their recovery.

Conclusion

It appears feasible and acceptable to provide patients with head and neck cancer with a rehabilitation education session and booklet in the acute post-operative phase.

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