

# Late Effects Clinic

*Dedicated Survivorship Care*

Malignant Haematology and Stem  
Cell Transplantation Service



## Haematology - Positive Change for Life:

**Improving health, wellbeing and quality of life of survivors of blood cancer following stem cell transplantation by promoting a healthy lifestyle change through nutrition coaching and physical activity.**

Lifestyle modification is an increasingly important component of cancer survivorship to ameliorate the effects of treatment, minimise co-morbidities and promote long-term wellness. Although curative for many people with blood cancer, stem cell transplant survivors often carry a burden of associated morbidity. Lifestyle modification programs focusing on nutrition and physical activity may impact substantially on overall health and quality of life.

Alfred Health in collaboration with SMICS and the Leukaemia Foundation is one of six successful applicants delivering pilot project projects funded by the Victorian Department of Health through the Victorian Cancer Survivorship Program. The project *Positive Change For Life* is a one year community-based lifestyle modification program promoting sustainable changes in diet, physical activity and health behaviours to maximize wellness and quality of life.

53 long-term survivors of blood cancer treated with stem cell transplantation ( $\geq 2$  years in ongoing remission) have enrolled in the project. Following physician clearance, participants receive an individually tailored community-based physical activity program consisting of a 12 month membership at a local YMCA, health and fitness centre or equivalent program. Referrals to community-based exercise physiology and physiotherapy have supported the adoption of a regular exercise regimen. Participants also receive ongoing dietary advice and health coaching from a dietician. Participation in the physical activity and nutrition programs has been supported by the development of a comprehensive manual which includes health information, a weekly exercise diary, meal planners, food diaries and recording charts to measure and monitor weight changes. Monthly newsletters contain healthy living recipes along with practical tips for increasing physical activities and improving eating habits. Every 6-8 weeks group physical activities are conducted and provide the opportunity for participants to meet other stem cell transplant survivors and engage in informal peer support. A critical component of the program is shared care with the participants GP who help monitor the participant's progress and support them in achieving their lifestyle their goals.

Results from 6 month follow up data demonstrate clinically meaningful improvements in fatigue levels have been experienced by 31% of participants. Significant improvements in physical activity levels at 6 months have been achieved with 69% reporting sufficient activity to achieve substantial health benefits compared with only 23% at baseline. Six month activity levels were significantly correlated with enhanced physical and emotional Quality of Life (QoL) and reduced fatigue. A trend to improved overall QoL was observed

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in those participants with higher activity levels at 6 months. 69% of participants report a significant reduction in the number of unhealthy eating behaviours at 6 months compared to baseline.

Health promotion is an essential component of optimal survivorship care. This data demonstrates the potential of an individualised community-based physical activity program coupled with nutritional advice to improve healthy lifestyle behaviours, enhance quality of life and reduce fatigue levels in long-term survivors of stem cell transplant.

**Further information about survivorship and the Positive Change for Life Project can be found at [www.alfredlateeffects.org.au](http://www.alfredlateeffects.org.au)**