

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

**BASELINE
PAPER**

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Check out our
website!

Message from the Investigators

Looks like spring is finally on its way! Hope you are enjoying the warmer weather.

In this edition of the newsletter, we highlight another baseline paper which was recently published! We also hear from two participants who recently completed the Year 5 follow-up.

Lastly, we highlight dragon boating for cancer survivors and hear from a current paddler in Edmonton.



We now look towards fall and reaching the end of data collection for the study. In total, 1353 participants completed the Year

1 assessment and 1174 participants completed the Year 3 assessment. To date, 990 participants have completed the Year 5 assessment.

Thank you again for your participation and commitment to the study!

We hope you have a lovely summer and that you can enjoy some time with family and friends.

This Year for AMBER

This past year, the investigators have been busy publishing baseline papers. To date, there are six published baseline papers with two more on the way. We will continue to highlight results in our newsletter, however, all published papers can be found on our website.

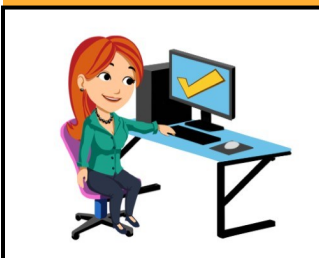
This next year the investigators will focus on analyzing and interpreting the data from baseline to year one. As well, most importantly, the study team is working towards



the final milestone of the study! It has been twelve years since we enrolled our first participant and it is hard to believe that later this year we will complete the year five timepoint and all the data collection for the study. It goes without saying, we are so grateful for all those who have participated over the years!

Lastly, as mentioned in our previous newsletter, we were successful in receiving additional funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). Some of these funds are currently being used to process all the blood samples that were collected for the study.

This is an important and exciting year for the study and we will continue to provide updates as we move forward!



www.amberstudy.com

AMBER Participants

Hear from two participants who completed the YR5 follow-up!

CALGARY

What has been a highlight of participating in the study?

One of the highlights I took away from this study, was having the in-depth and detailed look at my overall fitness. Having that information right in front of me, showing me what I needed to improve on, motivated me and really made me think about bettering myself. Each time I came in for testing, I was able to push myself just that little bit more and it gave me a sense of accomplishment (especially when I was able to last just a little longer on that darn treadmill!!! Haha).

Have you made any lifestyle changes after receiving the results of your AMBER study testing?

I have been reminding myself to put myself first and do what makes me feel good both mentally and physically. At work I now use my lunch hour to go for a walk instead of sitting at my desk, and I feel recharged and more balanced after.

What motivates you to be physically active?

I just turned 40, and I'm feeling better, younger, happier and more like myself everyday. I want to be here for my husband, my family, and our two corgis. My husband and I love spending our weekends dirt biking in the mountains, where

we now take the time to pause, look at what is around us and truly love the moment we are in. I want to spend many more days experiencing new and exciting moments in my life, and I am proud of myself for taking the tools I've been given and what I've learned from this study, and doing what it takes, to become a healthier version of me.

What is your perspective/ thoughts 5 years post diagnosis?

I am a survivor! I never realized how strong I really could be. All throughout chemo and radiation, I reminded myself that this "test" I was being put through, was just showing me and those around me, how much of a tough chickie I could be and especially now am. Oh, and I also found

that rocking a different brightly coloured lipstick to every treatment, really did just brighten the day up.



Calgary Participant
Daria S.

EDMONTON



Edmonton Participant
Colleen H.

What were you hoping to gain from participating in the study?

The AMBER study 'spoke' to me from the beginning. The website question, 'How does your lifestyle relate to breast cancer recovery and survival?' seemed simple, yet powerful and I wanted to be part of this five-year study. Breast cancer survivors' outcomes will surely be improved.

What has been a highlight of participating in the study?

I felt supported every step of the way with lots of encouragement offered. I received excellent explanations on each of my results. My highlight of the study is the ability to compare my Baseline, 1-year and then 3-year results. I quickly realized that I

needed this 'push' to continue walking, do regular stretching and exercise and to continually strive for improvements. It helps that I have found a reason to regularly exercise. I am passionate about the Breast Friends Dragon Boat Racing Team in Edmonton (see next page).

Are there any programs/resources/websites you found helpful after your cancer diagnosis?

Dr. Google is so handy to search out quick and easy answers, but I chose information provided by my health care teams at the Cross Cancer Institute (CCI) in Edmonton, the Canadian Cancer Society, my research team and other health care providers, like physiotherapists, doctors, and registered nurses. There is also an online community moderated by

trained individuals, who are usually cancer survivors, at cancerconnection.ca where persons can 'connect, learn and share stories with people who have had similar experiences with cancer.' I found this helpful.

Any words of motivation or wisdom that give you hope?

My personal mantra has become 'look for the silver lining', even when it seems bleak. Surrounding myself with positive people and keeping active, by putting one foot in front of the other, are also important. I try to focus on the glass that's half-full rather than half-empty.

Empowering Survivors One Stroke at a Time

The connection between the sport of dragon boating and breast cancer became linked in the mid 90's when a study was conducted at the University of British Columbia (UBC) by Dr. Don McKenzie, to investigate upper body exercise and lymphedema. It was found that the benefits of exercise both during and after cancer treatment far outweighed any risks. These results sparked breast cancer survivor dragon boating teams to form across Canada, North America and globally.

There are two teams in Alberta for breast cancer survivors to join: **Sistership Dragon Boat Association** in Calgary and the **Breast Friends Dragon Boat Racing Team** in Edmonton. Both were formed in 1998 and recently celebrated their 25th Anniversary.

AMBER participant Colleen H., who trains with the Breast Friends team in Edmonton, highlights what it is like being involved in this sport.

“As I was finishing my chemo, I was given information by a current member. Initially, I persuaded myself that ‘there was no way I would ever recover enough to participate in an energetic team sport.’ But, as some ideas do, this one stuck. With time and encouragement from friends and family, I reached out to get more information and decided to join.

Let it be known that I thought to myself, ‘now what have I done?’, but what could go wrong with the idea of jumping into a boat and paddling like crazy? What’s so hard about that?’

I’m frequently asked, ‘why, why do you want to do this; isn’t it hard?’ I don’t have an easy answer, but can honestly say that there is such a feeling of satisfaction, joy and empowerment when completing races or difficult practices. I remember after my first actual race, I crawled out of the boat, completely spent, but found the energy to exclaim ‘I did it!’. I’ve never had such a fantastic feeling. I plan on continuing for as long as I possibly can. I encourage all breast cancer survivors to see if dragon boating might be for you!”

Each dragon boat crew consists of 20 paddlers, a steersperson and a drummer. Members train together nine months of the year, both in the gym and on the water. While fun is the key, so is competition. Boats have been to festivals across Canada and have participated in survivor festivals around the world.



Colleen (right side) and teammates at the Calgary festival in 2022



Breast cancer survivors at any age or fitness level are welcome! Check out the team websites for more information:

Calgary

www.sistershipcalgary.com

Email: dsistership@gmail.com

Edmonton

www.breastfriendsedmonton.org

Email: info@breastfriendsedmonton.org

AMBER Baseline Paper

Below we highlight the results from an AMBER baseline paper published this past year. The paper compared data from the activity monitors with information collected from the physical activity questionnaires. A full copy of the paper can be found on our website under About the Study - Publications - www.amberstudy.com

Associations of Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour in Newly Diagnosed Women with Breast Cancer

Key Messages



Scan to read the manuscript

Tailored interventions may be helpful to increase physical activity for different populations

Planning for exercise **may help to achieve higher levels of moderate to vigorous physical activity**



Next Steps:

Examine social ecological factors, such as access to facilities and community-based programming, that may influence physical activity and sedentary behaviour in newly diagnosed breast cancer patients.

Wagoner et al., 2023

Purpose of Study

Determine the social-cognitive, demographic, clinical, and health-related factors associated with physical activity and sedentary behaviour in newly diagnosed women with breast cancer.

Main Findings



MORE Sedentary Behaviour is associated with increased %Body Fat and "being single or never married"



LESS Light Intensity Physical Activity (e.g., walking, stretching) is associated with increased %Body Fat, increased BMI, HER 2 and Stage 3 Diagnosis and "being single or never married"



MORE Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity (e.g., brisk walk, running, cycling) is associated with increased intentions and planning towards exercise



LESS Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity is associated with identifying as an ethnic minority, increased % Body Fat and decreased income

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