Dr. Lyons awarded $391,014 by the National Cancer Institute for a study to increase physical activity in breast cancer survivors

PRESS RELEASE
Elizabeth J. Lyons, PhD, MPH, Associate Professor in the Department of Nutrition and Metabolism, The University of Texas Medical Branch, has been awarded $391,014 by the National Cancer Institute for her study entitled “Narrative visualization for breast cancer survivors’ physical activity.”

The study seeks to determine if breast cancer survivors will exercise more if they engage in narrative visualization, a process of adding photographs, drawings and text to a data chart to make the information more meaningful. This addition may help increase the long-term willingness of such survivors to continue exercise and therefore reap the associated benefits.

The study will involve 60 women breast cancer survivors (aged 55 – 79), who report engaging in <150 minutes of physical activity per week. The first 20 women will use the prototype materials for a week and results will indicate what refinements will improve the materials.

The next group of 40 women will either receive the materials or engage in a standard self-regulation intervention for 12 weeks (with 12 weeks of no-intervention follow-up). Both groups will attend an orientation meeting and receive a workbook and wearable activity monitor and feedback app to use during the intervention. Results from this study will be used to develop a larger study of the relationships between reflection, motivation, and activity. Insights from the study will impact research and practice by testing a highly novel, scalable, and motivating intervention in a population at unique risk.

The proposed research, totaling $391,014, will help further the mission of the National Institutes of Health to develop the fundamental knowledge to improve health, reduce the burden of cancer and improve quality of life among breast cancer survivors. The 2-year project runs from July 2018 through June 2020.

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Elizabeth J. Lyons, PhD, MPH, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Nutrition and Metabolism, The University of Texas Medical Branch. She is a behavioral researcher with an interest in creating interventions to improve cancer prevention and control by changing weight-related behaviors. She is particularly interested in using technology to increase motivation for physical activity among sedentary older adults and breast cancer survivors. Dr. Lyons came to UTMB in 2011. She received a BA in English and Psychology from the University of Texas at Austin (2002) and a Master of Public Health (2005) and PhD (2010) in Health Behavior & Health Education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). After obtaining her PhD, she completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Interdisciplinary Obesity Center at UNC before coming to UTMB. More details are available online at https://shp.utmb.edu/nutr/facultyandstaff_bio_lyons.asp

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