Reviewer's report

Title: Self-reported needs, interests, physical activity, and nutrition habits of breast cancer survivors: a cross-sectional study

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Reviewer: Rowan Chlebowski

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Investigators at a Regional Breast Center in St. Gallen Switzerland surveyed a series of 342 consecutive patients regarding their decisions regarding exercise, diet and complementary and alternative medicine and their interest in participating in institutional programs. The survey was of limited scope but does provide some worthwhile information.

This reviewer is in agreement with the conclusion that “a remarkable fraction of breast cancer survivors” were participating in these activities. The observations are fairly straightforward but several comments could be made. It is unclear why such a low threshold for physical activity for 30 minutes per week was chosen when most of the fairly extensive literature indicates that 2.5-3 hours of moderate intensity, physical activity (walking but not strolling) was the level needed to be associated with a lower recurrence risk. That such a low threshold could be met by a large number of breast cancer patients is not surprising. The higher threshold of 2.5-3 hours per week for many individuals require some adjustment in lifestyle and it would be of interest to know whether this level of interest could be found.

When one examines the level of evidence supporting the potential efficacy of these three categories of activity in relation to the potential for influencing breast cancer risk they are strikingly different. Physical activity has numerous studies of association of higher physical activity either before and/or during and after diagnosis with lower breast cancer recurrence risk. As noted by the authors much less support for dietary change and the dietary change which has been associated with lower recurrence risk involved considerable more intensity than could be captured in the general question used here. Finally, there is no evidence that CAM is associated with recurrence risk. Therefore it seems unusual to in effect weigh all these three categories similarly. One could make a case for strongly encouraging increased physical activity and strongly discourage CAM use.

There is likely useful information in the diagrams provided but this reviewer had a difficult time understanding the breakdown. Perhaps the authors should “talk through” step-by-step one complete diagram so the reader could understand more clearly what if any are the associations being presented.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely
related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
None