

# A self-management course improves Patient Activation in people with cancer

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## Background & Aims

Penny Brohn UK's pioneering Bristol Whole Life Approach has been supporting people to live well with cancer for 35 years; empowering patients to self-manage through a combination of lifestyle information, self-care tools and support. Services are designed to work alongside conventional medical treatment, addressing the physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual impact of cancer.

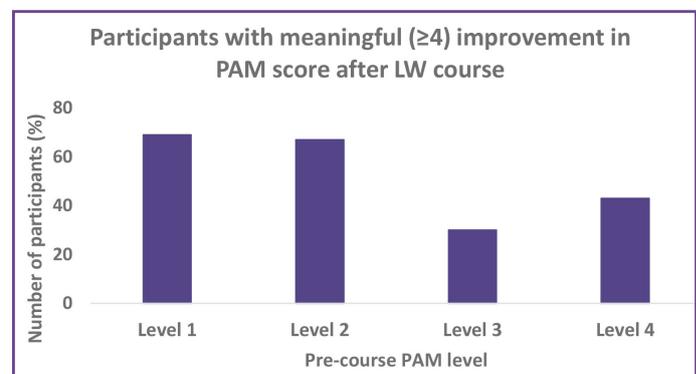
**Aim:** to evaluate the impact of Penny Brohn UK's national flagship two day Living Well With the Impact of Cancer course ("LW course") using the Patient Activation Measure (PAM), a validated measure looking at knowledge, skills and confidence to manage health.<sup>1</sup> People with higher levels of activation are more likely to adopt healthy lifestyle behaviours and follow the advice of doctors. Positive health behaviours are associated with better health outcomes and less healthcare costs.<sup>2</sup>

## Methods

People with cancer attending a LW course (April-October 2015) completed the 10-item PAM pre-course and 6 weeks later. Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 21. Statistical significance was set at  $p=.05$ . Change scores were stratified by baseline level of activation and coded as 'meaningful' (an increase of 4 or more points)<sup>3</sup> or 'not meaningful' (less than 4 point increase).

## Results

Eighty seven participants provided complete PAM data. The majority were female (85%), mean age 54 years (range 26-84 years), 49% had breast cancer. Participants reported significant improvements in Patient Activation ( $p<.01$ ), with 47% reporting a meaningful improvement ( $\geq 4$  points). The biggest improvements were seen for those with the lowest levels of activation pre-course; 69% at level 1 pre-course and 67% at level 2 had a meaningful improvement.



## Discussion

The LW course led to meaningful improvements in Patient Activation in nearly half of participants, and almost 70% in those reporting the lowest levels pre-course. Patient Activation is a key outcome for interventions seeking to help patients have a 'good survival' and live well, due to its ability to identify patients needing more support and predict long-term health outcomes.

## Conclusions

Self-management education and support can increase Patient Activation in people with cancer, leading to improved health behaviours and better clinical outcomes.

The concept of 'activation' may have a useful role in the design of support services for people with cancer.

## References

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3. Turner A., Anderson J., Wallace L., Bourne C. (2015) An evaluation of a self-management program for patients with long-term conditions. Patient Education and Counseling, 98(2): 213-219.