

# Last but Not Least: Nutrition Counselling by Dietitian for Women with Cancer during COVID-19 Pandemic

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## Introduction:

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected healthcare system to provide routine services to patients with cancer. Vulnerable group such as cancer patients have higher risk of getting COVID-19 with higher mortality rate. Guidelines on Prevention of COVID-19 for the general public emphasizes vaccination, good personal/environmental hygiene and social distancing measures, while keeping balance diet is included at the end. The **CATWALK** (Cancer Alliance Together We Achieve Leisure Kinetics) program initiated to offer women with cancer individualized nutrition and dietary advice, supplemented with physical fitness and emotion support elements, to boost their ability of self-care in nutrition.

## Methods:

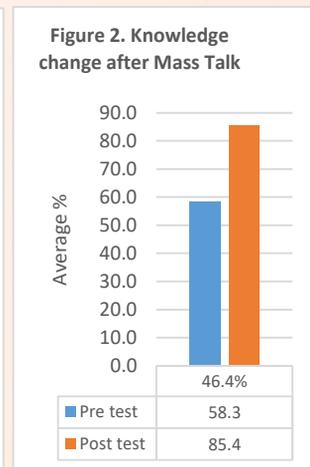
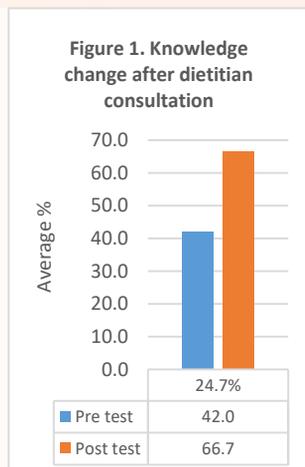
Fifty women with cancer joined the **CATWALK** program during July 1st 2020- June 30th, 2021. Two sessions of dietitian counselling including anthropometry, biochemical and psychosocial parameters review, comprehensive dietary assessment and individualized nutrition and dietary advice were given. Two supplementary talks with topic on physical fitness and emotion support were delivered. Surveys were conducted before and after intervention to evaluate patients' knowledge and attitude change.

## Results:

It showed improvement on knowledge score before and after attending two sessions of dietitian counselling (42% vs 66.7%, figure 1) and two supplementary talks (58.3% vs 85.4%, figure 2). Most participants had positive attitude toward their dietary management (93.4%) and expressed satisfaction with the program (95.6%). Indication of willingness to join similar nutrition program in the future (93.3%) was shown.

## Conclusions:

Healthy diet is important to our immune system and overall wellness. Patients with cancer continue to be threaten during COVID-19 pandemic. While focusing on prevention, treatment and recovery for COVID-19, nutrition monitoring, nutrition screening, education and individualized dietary plan to maintain adequate nutrition status and improve self care on management of diet-related symptoms should be integrated into community standard care to this vulnerable group, to optimize health outcomes and quality of life during COVID-19 and Long-COVID.



*Under the epidemic, my family income has dropped sharply. It also made me afraid to go out for fear of getting infected. With this program, I can go out to see a dietitian and let me know what is lacking in my body that causes weight loss. I understand that I should eat nutritious food. I also misunderstand the health problems, and I would like to thank the dietitians for their patient guidance and evaluation. I hope that more patients can participate in this program in the future to improve their health.*

**Keywords:** Dietitians, Nutrition, Covid 19



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Acknowledgement:

