



DANCING WITH HEALTH

AN EU COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP FOR
ACTIVE LIFESTYLES FOR THE PREVENTION AND
TREATMENT OF BREAST CANCER



PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY

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THE PROJECT

The project **DANCING WITH HEALTH (DWH)**, co-financed in 2008 by the ERASMUS+ SPORT programme of the European Union, aims to promote physical activity in the form of dance to breast cancer survivors by offering an innovative dance protocol to involve them in a moderate / vigorous physical activity and as a consequence, to help them accept and reconnect with their bodies, build new self-confidence, enhance self-expression, address feelings of isolation, depression, anger and fear and to strengthen personal resources and above all, to do physical activity necessary for their wellbeing.

In order to evaluate the feasibility and the benefits of a specific dance protocol in breast cancer survivors, a pilot study was developed to evaluate the effectiveness of a therapeutic dance programme on psychological and physiological parameters in the different participating European countries (Italy, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Netherlands and UK).

OUR VISION

The basic view of DANCING WITH HEALTH is that sport for cancer patients has a double role. The first is connected with physical education, movement and health information, concepts contained in the primary directions of the EU. The other role is connected with learning and education. Through training, patients can be supported by skilled experts who can properly accompany them in their difficult path of treatments and recovery.





PROJECT ACTIVITIES & TIMELINE

THE PROJECT STARTED ITS ACTIVITY ON JANUARY 1ST 2018 AND LASTED 36 MONTHS (AN EXTENSION WAS REQUESTED DUE TO CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC AND CONSEQUENT LOCKDOWN THAT DEVIATED THE PROJECT'S WORK PROGRAMME).

ACTIVITY	START DATE	END DATE
DEVELOPMENT OF AN INNOVATIVE DANCE PROTOCOL FOR BREAST CANCER SURVIVORS	JANUARY 2018	JUNE 2018
TRAIN THE TRAINERS OF DANCE THERAPISTS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROFESSIONALS TO STANDARDIZE THE PROTOCOL AND MAKE IT TRANSFERABLE AND REPLICABLE	JUNE 2018	DECEMBER 2020
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DANCE PROTOCOL IN THE PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES (PILOT ACTION)	SEPTEMBER 2018	MARCH 2020

OUR TRAINING



DANCING WITH HEALTH protocol can be taught by duly trained dance and exercise professionals.

The project's course combines theoretical and practical classes about Dance, PA and health; Breast cancer and PA; Dance Movement Therapy for breast cancer survivors; functional evaluation.

The dance professionals are required to teach the coreographies of the protocol while the presence of an exercise professional is fundamental to better understand the relationship between physical activity and health and its practical implications.

We have chosen the **Train the trainers** approach due to its numerous benefits for participants:

- instead of relying on one individual to go through a lengthy training process, we can build a team of instructors and enablers so national training initiatives can benefit of first hand perspective.
- at the same time, we give our enablers tools concerning not only what to teach, but how to teach so to continue, ideally endless, the training cascade effect.

OUR DANCING PROTOCOL



The protocol provided two lessons per week, lasting one hour each for a total of 32 sessions.

The sessions/lessons were generally organized as follows:

- 10 minutes warm-up.
- 40 minutes individual or small groups work at an intensity between 50 and 70% of the theoretical maximum frequency of the subject.
- 10 minutes cool-down.

The protocol combines an introduction to a range of dance styles (merengue, bachata, cha-cha-cha, salsa, rumba and tango) with exercise components.

The pilots were delivered by three facilitators per group of 10-12 women.

Facilitators included experienced professional dancers with at least five years of experience and exercise professionals with qualifications in sports and movement sciences, which reflects the skills needed to deliver the core protocol.

In the UK the facilitators were registered dance movement psychotherapists who also had extensive professional dance and exercise/sports expertise and so the delivery of the protocol in this particular pilot was enhanced therapeutically.

OUR DANCING PROTOCOL



Women who have participated in the protocol have respected the following criteria:

- Aged 30-65
- Their diagnosis could not be dated more than 3 years in order to have psychological effects because women who are “out” of the disease do not want to be involved anymore in activities related to their cancer.
- Chemotherapy: each country has its own situation, so generally speaking, chemotherapy has had to be concluded at least 6 weeks before the enrolment.

Before and after the programme, the physical, functional and psychological status of the women was evaluated with the following tests:

- Anthropometric measurements.
- Cardiorespiratory fitness.
- Muscle strength.
- Balance.
- Flexibility.
- Psychological and fatigue evaluation.

All the tests have to be administered by expert operators: health and sport professionals for physical and functional tests, and/or psychologists for psychological evaluation.

OUR RESULTS



WE HAVE SELECTED AND TRAINED 70 DANCE PROFESSIONALS/INSTRUCTORS AND 30 EXERCISE PROFESSIONALS IN THE PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES.

WE HAVE INVOLVED 60 WOMEN WHO SURVIVED BEAST CANCER AND MADE THEM EXERCISE AND DANCE AND HAVE FUN.

WE HAVE PRESENTED THE PROJECT AND DISCUSSED ABOUT DANCE AND BREAST CANCER TO MORE THAN 200 PEOPLE IN EUROPE.

OUR RESULTS

WE HAVE REALISED 2 MANUALS TO TRANSFER THE KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPED AND OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Manual for health and sport professionals and dance teachers/therapists (Intellectual Output 1) that summarizes the scientific evidence relating to breast cancer and cancer care post-surgery, highlights the importance of physical activity and dance in the prevention and treatment of numerous diseases (non-communicable chronic diseases), presents research on integrative therapies during and after breast cancer treatment and on dance and dance movement therapy with breast cancer patients. It then describes the project pilot action phases (recruitment of patients, test of functional and psychological evaluation and its results) and the training methodology (the dance protocol).

The Manual is available for free download on the project website www.dancing-health.eu in English, Bulgarian, Italian, Lithuanian.

Manual about the application of the dance protocol (Intellectual Output 2) for health and sport professionals and dance teachers/therapists to provide them with the project's dance protocol that they can replicate in their own context and country.

The manual also provides suggestions to enhance the sessions from a dance movement therapy perspective to promote psychological benefits.

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