Changing our approach to Cancer Survivorship

I'm Janette Vardy. I'm a Medical Oncologist at the Concord Cancer Centre and I head up the cancer survivorship centre we've just set up here. I also co-lead Sydney's survivorship research group at the University of Sydney.

Probably the biggest thing is that things have changed now. Previously we were just looking at trying to get patients *to* survive, so it was all about the time to survival. Whilst that is still really important, we now also know that the quality of that survival is important.

One of the interventions that can help with that is educating people about what it is to be a survivor. The focus now needs to change so that we're looking at wellness and healthy living.

The types of interventions that can certainly help with that are things like interventions for fatigue. Probably the best proven thing for that is an exercise program, that while helping with fatigue, can also improve their quality of life.

An important thing is weight control. We know that patients with breast cancer for example that are more overweight have a higher rate of recurrence of their breast cancer. An intervention, again that helps with weight control is important. Exercise ticks lots of boxes because it can help with fatigue, quality of life, weight control, but also things like mood and just physical functioning - getting back range of motion - all those types of things.

Other things that would be important are things like education on how to navigate both the health system for survivors, but also how to navigate looking for community options for things that would work well for them. Though again it might be about an exercise; it may be about weight control.

Other interventions for more psychological distress may be support groups. Things like where patients may have anxiety and depression, if it's proven depression then obviously an intervention that would be considered would be pharmacological. Other things that are very helpful might be cognitive behaviour therapy.

Going back to the more physical things. Things that we need to look at; interventions for wellbeing are stoping smoking and decreasing alcohol input are important. But being able to offer a really holistic approach is probably the most important thing.