



# YOGA THRIVE

## Therapeutic Yoga for Cancer Survivors

R E S E A R C H U P D A T E

## Yoga Thrive Research Program Summary

### Research Overview:

Dr. Nicole Culos-Reed is funded to research the benefits of physical activity for cancer survivors. In 2002, Dr. Culos-Reed teamed up with Susi Hatley-Aldous to create a 7-week therapeutic yoga program and examine the potential physical and psychological benefits for survivors off treatment. With the success and positive findings of our initial research, in 2007/2008 five new teachers were trained to expand the program in the Calgary area, and the program was opened up to include survivors on and off treatment, as well as support persons. To reach an even greater number of survivors, minimize barriers to being physically active, and encourage maintenance of active living through practicing yoga, our 7-week program was filmed and the first ever cancer-specific yoga DVD was produced.

### What We Have Found To Date:

The outcomes of our initial research (2002-2007) included both physical and psychological measurements. Participants were randomized into either the yoga program or a control group. Our results found improvements in the following areas for the yoga participants compared to the controls:

- Increased overall physical activity levels
- Improved strength
- Improved mood states
- Decreased levels of perceived stress
- Improved quality of life

We are now in the midst of analyzing the results from our yoga expansion classes and the inclusion of on and off treatment survivors and their support persons. Feedback from our participants would suggest that the program has been highly beneficial for helping to minimize or improve treatment-related side effects, improve overall quality of life, and increase confidence for engaging in an active lifestyle. We have also had consistent feedback from participants asking “what next?”, so we are currently developing a phase II Yoga Thrive protocol for survivors who wish to continue their practice in a cancer-specific class setting. Finally, the research on the benefits of the DVD compared to the class program, as well as using the DVD as a maintenance tool are just underway. We expect initial results from this research in the spring of 2010.

### Where We Are Going:

Accessibility and availability of cancer-specific community programs are very limited for cancer survivors. Our goal is to increase the opportunities for survivors to receive the benefits of active living through increased programming. After the teacher training (May 2009), we are planning to focus on expanding the Yoga Thrive program to rural locations in Alberta. We will also be looking at the using the Yoga Thrive program to promote activity in specific cancer groups such as prostate and brain cancer.