



## **Cancer Patients Likelihood of Returning to Work Improves by 73% After Taking Part in Innovative Digital Coaching Solution Trial**

**Sydney 07 December 2021.** In a world-first, CancerAid and life and health insurer AIA Australia have published leading research which demonstrates how a digital health program significantly improves return-to-work outcomes for cancer survivors.

In Australia, approximately 45% of cancer diagnoses occur in people of working age, but fortunately, due to improvements in medicine, survivorship is increasing. While a person may recover from cancer, they may experience physical and/or psychological challenges which can hinder their return to work and wellbeing. Sharing a passion for supporting Australians to thrive after a cancer diagnosis, CancerAid and AIA Australia embarked on the research study which has produced outstanding results.

The study conducted over three years found:

- 30.4 per cent of participants in the CancerAid Coach Program returned to work over a median 12-month period, compared to 17.6 per cent in the control group. *This outcome means patients in the program were 73% more likely to return to work.*
- 39 per cent of patients in the program reported improvement of their symptoms.
- The program has also demonstrated a shortening in the time to return-to-work by 22%, which means that patients were returning to work on average 16.5 weeks earlier than patients receiving usual care

The CancerAid Coach Program consists of an online e-health app, a series of weekly messages, via email and text, and telephone health coaching sessions delivered over a twelve-week period. The program takes a holistic view and reinforces key health messages on appropriate symptom tracking, exercise, diet, mindfulness, and sleep strategies and allows patients to monitor their condition.

The findings from the research study have been published by JMIR Cancer, a peer-reviewed journal with a focus on innovation and technology. The publication, *A Digital-Based Coaching Intervention for Cancer Survivors with Job Loss, a Retrospective Analysis* focuses on the digitally delivered CancerAid Coach Program and its ability to increase cancer patients' likelihood of returning to work.

The publication of this research yields significant promise in the advancement of cancer patient outcomes. In a clinical setting, the focus of medical practitioners is traditionally on helping patients overcome the illness. After recovering from cancer, patients may take months or years to commence any return-to-work attempts while they wait for improvement of any existing symptoms. Unfortunately, this can make it harder for a person to reach their pre-illness work capacity.

Interventions such as the CancerAid Coach program, when introduced at an early stage in a patient's recovery and combined with existing follow-up care can change this narrative, and can lead to improved financial, physical and mental wellbeing as well as an improved quality of life.

CancerAid CEO and Co-Founder Dr Raghav Murali-Ganesh said, "*We are delighted with the outcome of the study. As cancer outcomes improve and increase survival rates, so too does the concept of cancer as a chronic disease and so behavioural change becomes important. The goal of the CancerAid program is to empower patients to be more active participants in their own health, in particular on clinically meaningful activities.*"



Professor Michael Boyer AM, a respected medical oncologist at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse, says the issue of post cancer care is becoming an ever more important concept. Professor Boyer, who contributed data analysis to the research paper in his private role as a Cancer Aid advisor, added, *"Survivorship following a cancer diagnosis is an important clinical metric, specifically, return-to-work has been demonstrated to improve patient quality of life, feeling or a return to normalcy as well as reducing any financial implications. As we improve survival outcomes with modern treatment, we are pleased to publish research to demonstrate an intervention to improve return to work outcomes."*

CEO and Managing Director of AIA Australia and New Zealand, Damien Mu said, *"At AIA Australia, we are driven by our commitment to help Australians lead healthier, longer, better lives. Seeing the results from this research fills us with a strong sense of hope for cancer survivors. We're honored to have been able to support this research that will help them thrive after they recover."*

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#### **About the CancerAid Coach Program**

The CancerAid Coach Program is designed to help manage symptoms and adverse effects during or after treatment. The program consists of an online e-health app, a series of weekly messages, (email and text) and telephone health coaching sessions delivered over a twelve-week period. The program takes a holistic view and reinforces key health messages on appropriate symptom tracking, exercise, diet, mindfulness, and sleep strategies and allows patients to monitor their condition.

By focusing on interventions demonstrated to improve patient outcomes, it is predicted that return-to-work outcomes will also increase as patients now encounter fewer impairments in physical and mental health.

#### **About CancerAid**

CancerAid's mission is to empower people and organisations affected by cancer to thrive through expertise, empathy and technology. CancerAid was founded in 2015 by oncologists looking to empower people to better manage their care and take back control of their diagnosis.

The founding members of the CancerAid team noticed that empowered and supported patients achieved better health outcomes. These experiences helped shape what we offer at CancerAid today: behavioural change and education programs that enable organisations and people affected by cancer to thrive.

#### **About AIA Australia**

AIA Australia is a leading life insurance specialist with over 48 years' experience and a commitment to help Australians live healthier, longer, better lives. In 2014 the company launched AIA Vitality, a world leading, science-based health and wellbeing program, to the Australian market. In July 2017, AIA and its partners launched AIA's health insurance business, now known as AIA Health Insurance.

The lives of more than 3.8 million Australians are protected and enhanced through AIA Australia's unique value proposition of life, health and wellbeing. Its vision is to embrace shared value in championing Australia and New Zealand to be the healthiest and best protected nations in the world.