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Building yourself to better cope
A CASE STUDY OF A CYCLING TEAM LED BY CANCER SURVIVORS

OVERARCHING THEME 1
A UNIQUE COMBINATION OF SPORT AND SUPPORT
The power of the sport/support combination is that each activity facilitates the other.

RESULTS
• 9 themes
• 2 overarching themes

THEMES
Motivation and encouragement
Motivation to ride is provided online and in person.
"...it was good because they had some riders there that were encouraging me to go up, because it was my first ride. So I really felt that it was a good acceptance by the group." (Jim, 145–149)

Cycling as therapy
Cycling can alleviate the negative emotions associated with cancer and survivorship.
"You come back from a bike ride and you've cleared your head as well as your body." (Ashleigh, 1364–1365)

Fitness as a defence against cancer
Members cycle to increase their physical fitness and thereby fortify their bodies against cancer.
"In the back of your mind is the recurrence side of it and the fact that you're building yourself to better cope if things weren't that great." (Ashleigh, 1393–1395)

Sharing experience of cancer
The common experience of cancer facilitates mutual support and learning.
"If I was just with a normal cycling group then [cancer is] sort of something you keep to yourself. But here, if you've got something to say, or someone has something to say, you listen, or they listen to you." (Jim, 315–320)

Forming relationships
Friendships based on common interests and experiences become a motivator to attend rides.
"We all sort of bond, and we all have our conversation around that coffee table, and I like that." (Jim, 244–245)

Belonging
A cherished sense of belonging to the team does not diminish over time.
"Because of the team you can go out by yourself and (think), 'I'm wearing the jersey, I'm still part of Cancer Voices'." (Julie, 805–807)

Giving back
Helping others allows positive meaning to be attributed to the cancer experience.
"Once you've been through treatment a lot of people want to do something to help others." (Ashleigh, 202–203)

OVERARCHING THEME 2
SURVIVORSHIP ON SURVIVORS' TERMS
Cycling team participation offers increased agency and control over survivorship.

INTRODUCTION
Physical activity has been shown to increase cancer survivors' quality of life and has been associated with lower cancer risk and mortality rates from some cancers. However, research indicates over half of cancer survivors do not maintain recommended levels of physical activity and research into ongoing programs is limited. The Cancer Voices SA (CVSA) cycling team enables cancer survivors to exercise together, but differs from many reported interventions: it is ongoing, it is run by cancer survivors, it attracts a high proportion of males, and cancer experience is not a prerequisite for joining.

METHOD
Data: semi-structured interviews (N=7), participant observation of two rides (N = 15), and naturalistic data (Facebook, AdelaideCyclists). Analysis: thematic analysis.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• Cater for a variety of ability levels, e.g. by regrouping
• Encouragement assists new members to persevere
• Avoiding the 'support group' label reduces barriers
• Emphasize health benefits of exercise for survivors
• Having cancer survivor leaders normalizes survivorship
• Including people without cancer prevents survivors from feeling they must stop attending once well
• Exercise facilitates the exchange of support.