

Online supplement 1 to “Understanding older adults’ first associations with the word ‘cancer’: a mixed methods study in England”

By Edelyn Agustina, Rachael Dodd, Jo Waller, and Charlotte Vrinten.

Categorisation of the cancer fear items

| Cancer anxiety | Cancer worry | | | | |
|----------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| | Never | Occasionally | Sometimes | Often | Very often |
| Not at all | No fear | | | | |
| Slightly | | Moderate fear | | | |
| Quite a bit | | | | High fear | |
| Extremely | | | | | |

Reproduced with permission from Vrinten C, Boniface D, Lo SH, et al. (2017). Does psychosocial stress exacerbate avoidant responses to cancer information in those who are afraid of cancer? A population-based survey among older adults in England. *Psychology & Health*, Epub April 2017. DOI: 10.1080/08870446.2017.1314475. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08870446.2017.1314475>.

Online supplement 2 to “Understanding older adults’ first associations with the word ‘cancer’: a mixed methods study in England”

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Descriptive statistics for participants’ attitude towards cancer (n=1105)

| | n (%) |
|---|------------|
| Cancer intensity: How anxious do you feel when you think about cancer? | |
| Not at all | 472 (42.7) |
| Slightly anxious | 445 (40.3) |
| Quite anxious | 135 (12.2) |
| Extremely anxious | 35 (3.2) |
| Don’t know/refused | 18 (1.6) |
| Cancer frequency: In general, how often do you worry about getting cancer yourself? | |
| Never | 540 (48.9) |
| Occasionally | 385 (34.8) |
| Sometimes | 125 (11.3) |
| Often | 29 (2.6) |
| Very often | 14 (1.3) |
| Don’t know/refused | 12 (1.1) |
| Cancer fear: Cancer anxiety and cancer worry combined | |
| No cancer fear | 393 (35.6) |
| Moderate cancer fear | 512 (46.3) |
| High cancer fear | 173 (15.7) |
| Don’t know/refused | 27 (2.4) |
| Cancer avoidance 1: Do you avoid reading stories about cancer in newspapers, a magazine or online? | |
| Yes | 187 (16.9) |
| No | 861 (77.9) |
| Don’t know/refused | 57 (5.2) |
| Cancer avoidance 2: Do you avoid talking to other people about cancer? | |
| Yes | 128 (11.6) |
| No | 969 (87.7) |
| Don’t know/refused | 8 (0.7) |
| Cancer avoidance 3: Do you avoid watching programmes about cancer on TV? | |
| Yes | 229 (20.7) |
| No | 821 (74.3) |
| Don’t know/refused | 55 (5.0) |
| Overall cancer avoidance | |
| No avoidance | 755 (68.3) |
| Avoids one of the three behaviours | 86 (7.8) |
| Avoids two of the three behaviours | 92 (8.3) |
| Avoids all behaviours | 78 (7.1) |
| Don’t know/refused | 94 (8.5) |

Online supplement 3 to “Understanding older adults’ first associations with the word ‘cancer’: a mixed methods study in England”

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Description and examples of themes and subthemes for content analysis of participants’ first associations with cancer

| Themes/Subthemes | Description | Examples |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Incurability (Death) | Statements related to death or states/implies that cancer is incurable | ‘Death’, ‘No cure’, ‘My mum died of cancer’ |
| Identity | Statements related to beliefs about cancer (Does not include beliefs about cancer treatment—see ‘references to general treatment’) | |
| Negative beliefs about cancer | Describes cancer as something negative or serious or with negative word(s) | ‘Bad’, ‘Horrible disease’, ‘Scary’ |
| Cancer as a health condition | Describes cancer as a state of health or the symptoms, progression or appearance of cancer without positive or negative evaluation | ‘Illness’, ‘Lumps’, ‘Deformed cells’ |
| Type of cancer | States a specific type of cancer or asks what type of cancer it is | ‘Breast cancer’, ‘What sort’, ‘Where is it’ |
| Avoidance | Describes cancer as something to be avoided or does not want to get cancer | ‘Try not to think’, ‘I hope I don’t get it’ |
| Not bothered by cancer | Perceives cancer as something not given a thought about (but not actively avoiding it) | ‘Don’t think about it’, ‘Not thought about it’, ‘Take it as it comes’ |
| Not specified | Perceives cancer as something that does not fall into any of the above subthemes | ‘Big C’, ‘Very common’ |
| Emotional response | Statements related to how individual feel or would feel about cancer | |
| Negative | Expresses negative emotional reactions or feelings towards cancer | ‘Fear’, ‘Panic’, ‘Why me’ |
| Positive/Hopeful | Provides encouraging or positive comments or are not negatively affected by cancer | ‘Remain positive’, ‘Fight it’, ‘Not scared’ |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Empathy | Expresses sympathy to affected individuals | 'Sympathy', 'Hope people do survive' |
| Causes | Statements related to what individuals think causes/caused cancer | |
| Smoking | Mentions smoking or relates smoking as a cause of cancer | 'Smoking', 'Increased if not given up smoking' |
| Genetics | Attributes cancer to individual's genetics or perceives cancer as something heritable | 'Family history', 'Genetics' |
| Others | Mentions other causes of cancer besides smoking and genetics | 'Fate', 'Getting old', |
| Controllability | Statements related to how cancer is/should be dealt with | |
| Survival | Indicates that cancer is curable or that there is chance of surviving or questions curability | 'Curable', 'Not death anymore', 'Will I survive' |
| References to general treatment | Mentions treatment related terms, description of treatment or questions whether cancer is treatable. Note: Treatment/treatability and cure/curability are not the same | 'Hospital', 'Horrible treatment', 'How to treat', 'seek a doctor' |
| References to specific treatments | Mentions specific types of cancer treatment | 'Chemotherapy', 'Radiation treatment', 'Surgery' |
| Prevention and early detection | Mentions prevention or views early detection or treatment of cancer to be important | 'Preventing it', 'Early diagnosis', 'Seek treatment ASAP' |
| Cancer research or campaigns | Mentions cancer research, cancer related organisations or campaigns to cure or raise awareness about cancer | 'Cancer research', 'Macmillan', 'Pink ladies running around the streets' |
| Consequences of cancer | Statements related to perceived consequences of having cancer, with the exception of responses that mentions death—see 'death' | |
| Physical | Mentions negative changes to bodily parts as a result of cancer or state of poor health or pain | 'Pain', 'being ill', 'losing your hair' |
| Social | Expresses concerns towards close ones if they were to have cancer | 'Family you leave behind', 'Disruption to family life' |
| Other types of consequences | Mentions other types of consequences of cancer that does not fall into any of the above subthemes | 'Suffering', 'Life changing', 'Tough time ahead' |
| Social networks | Statements that mentioned family members, friends or people he/she knows | |
| Someone they know | Mentions family members or friends or people he/she knows without any elaboration | 'Family', 'My dad', 'People I know' |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Someone had a history of cancer | Mentions family members or friends who either has or has had cancer | 'Brother had it', 'Friends who have had cancer', 'People who have it' |
| Someone died of cancer | Mentions family members or friends who died of cancer (All responses will also be coded under theme 'incurability (death)') | 'Wife death', 'Lost ones', 'Losing family members' |
| Miscellaneous | Statements that are ambiguous or does not match any of the above themes | 'Work', 'Bad design', 'Support' |
| Missing | Participants responded don't know, nothing, refused to answer or if response is illegible for transcription | |
| Don't know/Nothing Illegible Refused | Replies don't know, nothing or not applicable Unable to read response due to bad handwriting Does not answer question at all | 'Don't know', 'No', 'Nothing', 'NA' |