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)

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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	Replies don't know, nothing or not applicable	'Don't know', 'No', 'Nothing', 'NA'
Illegible	Unable to read response due to bad handwriting	
Refused	Does not answer question at all	