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Physicians' defence mechanisms during communication with advanced cancer patients

The present thesis advances our understanding of healthcare communication and more specifically of the defensive functioning of physicians themselves during real life consultations with patients suffering from advanced cancer. The main focus is on whether the physicians' defensive functioning, perceived stress or the content of the consultation are related to patients' satisfaction with communication and working alliance; and whether physician and/or patient variables are related to physicians' defensive functioning. The main findings of this thesis are summarized and put into perspective by discussing the complexity of communication and of defensiveness, the paradoxes in healthcare communication and the implications for clinical care and for communication education.

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