

Elucidating the Experience of Head and Neck Cancer Care in Focus Groups with Patients and Caregivers

Mahiya Habib, Nuala Burnham, Melissa B. Korman, Yasmine Hejri-Rad, Aaron Palachi, Tracey DasGupta, Lesley Gotlib-Conn, Ari Zaretsky, Marlene Jacobson, Kevin Higgins, Danny Enepekides, & Janet Ellis

Background

- Head and neck cancer (HNC) is associated with increased patient distress presenting as:
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Stress
 (Calver et al., 2019)
- Patients with HNC face unique physical, functional, social, and psychosocial challenges during treatment course that impact quality of life (QOL)
- Person centered care approaches increase a team's capacity to address a patient's unique set of symptoms, mitigate distress, and improve QOL

Study Aim

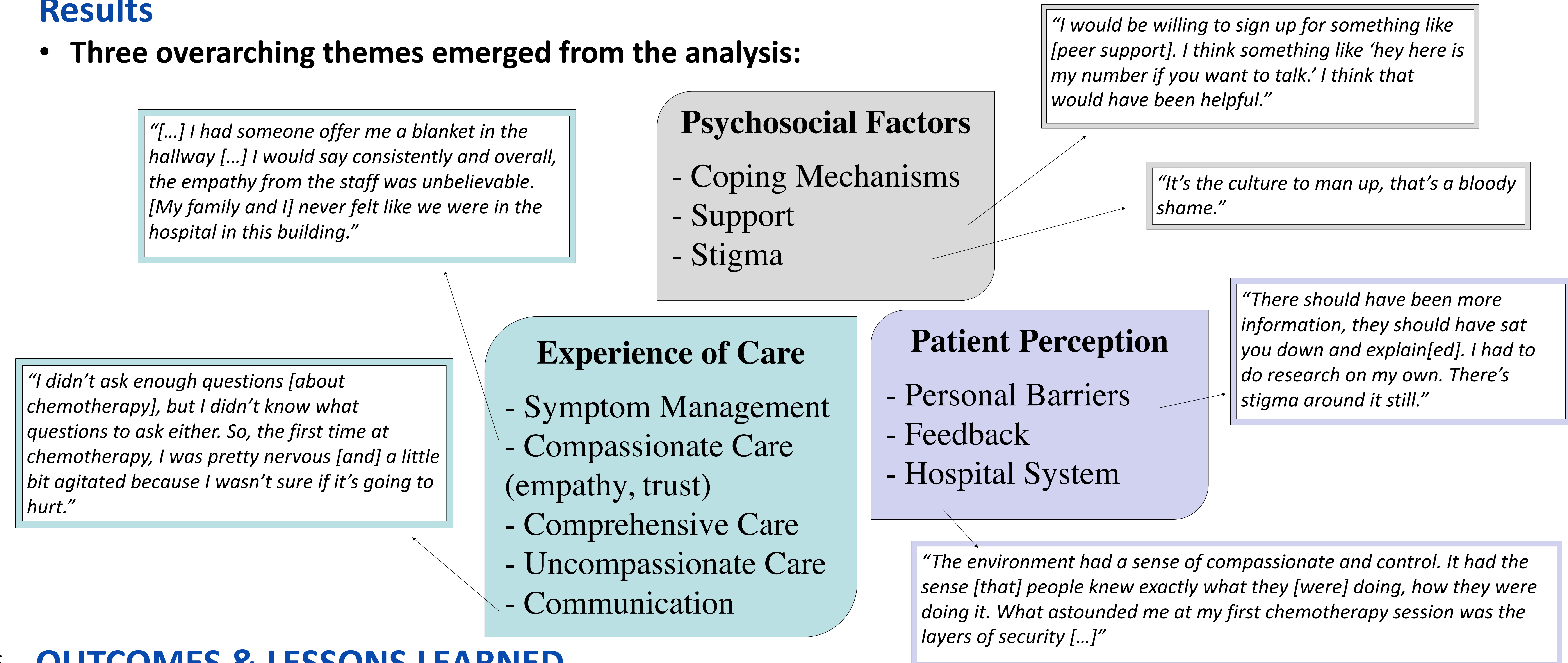
- To elucidate the patient experience of treatment of HNC with a focus on actionable recommendations for clinicians to improve the provision of person centered care

Methods

- Three focus groups were held with a total of n=13 participants (9 patients, 4 caregivers)
- Focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim
- Inductive thematic analysis of transcripts was conducted by two reviewers using NVivo Data Management Software

Results

- **Three overarching themes emerged from the analysis:**



OUTCOMES & LESSONS LEARNED

- Many patients expressed a desire to be acknowledged as part of the team rather than just "as a number" or even just "a patient" consistent with recommendations for using a PCC approach
- Importance of effective communication between patients and healthcare providers was evident across categories
- Patients reported being uninformed about the availability and accessibility of psychosocial support

Discussion

- This study provided insight into the experiences of HNC patients and identified treatment preferences and needs
- Major themes emerged/were identified that can inform clinical practice and in turn, enhance quality of care, as defined by both patients and caregivers
- Three key that impacted quality of care for patients were interactions with healthcare providers, perceived compassionate care, and effective communication
- Actionable elements should include more opportunities for face to face interaction, and the development of effective patient-physician rapport so patients are properly informed
- Future research could involve interventions to facilitate psychological adjustment for HNC patients to improve quality of life and reduce distress