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## Exploring Occupational Disruption in Newly Diagnosed Individuals with Cancer with Minor (Dependent) Children

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# EXPLORING OCCUPATIONAL DISRUPTION IN NEWLY DIAGNOSED INDIVIDUALS WITH CANCER WITH MINOR (DEPENDENT) CHILDREN

Riley Harrold; Dr. MacDermott, OTD, OTR/L; Dr. Cohill, OTD, OTR/L

## BACKGROUND

According to the American Cancer Society (2019), there were more than 1.7 million new cases of cancer in 2019 alone. Individuals are being diagnosed at a young age with 22.4% of cases occurring in individuals 22-55 years old and whom are childrearing age (Shah et al., 2017). There are an estimated 2.85 million children under the age of 18 who are living with a parent who has cancer (Shah et al., 2017). Newly diagnosed individuals face changes in daily life, the threat of possible death, and fear of dying (Compas et al., 1994). Changes in shared family roles can impact the entire family across many domains (Heiney et al., 1997; Helseth & Ulfset, 2005).

## PROBLEM

Newly diagnosed individuals develop secondary psychosocial symptoms that impact the parenting roles and face challenges maintaining routines in the home (Kim et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2005).

## PURPOSE

This project aims to understand the deep impact of a cancer diagnosis and subsequent treatment on the individual and their family.

By understanding how this disease effects roles, habits, values, and interests within a family, there can be resources developed to address the parenting role and better support the family through this time.

**The purpose of this project is to further explore the impact of a cancer diagnosis and subsequent treatment on the individual and their family. This project also aims to investigate the role of occupational therapy in integrative therapy services.**

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## METHODS

Information was collected from November 2019 – February 2020 in the form of observations, surveys, interviews, and informal assessments. Additionally, this project investigated the role of occupational therapy in integrative therapy services.

**Setting:** Knight Cancer Institute, which is part of a larger hospital system: Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) in Portland, OR.

**Part one:** A brief survey regarding impact of psychosocial symptoms on daily routines was developed and disseminated among social workers in the Portland community.

**Part two:** Interviews using *Occupational Circumstance Assessment and Rating Form (OCAIRS)* mental health form 1 (roles, habits, interests, social, and values).

Participant A	Participant B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Female</li> <li>Spouse of male patient</li> <li>Mother of two daughters</li> <li>Owner of own business and homemaker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Female</li> <li>Patient</li> <li>Mother of two daughters</li> <li>Worked part-time/caregiver to sister-in-law</li> </ul>

**Part three:** In-depth interviews with instructors of the gentle yoga class, meditation mindfulness, women's writing group, inpatient massage, and the program director, analysis of current programming was explored.

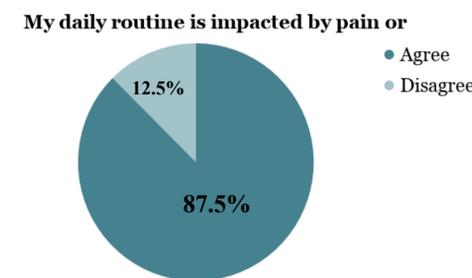
All in-depth interviews were recorded and later transcribed by the doctoral student.

## RESULTS

### Part one:

#### Figure 1.

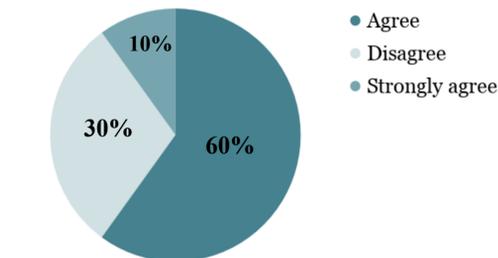
*Impact of Cancer on Daily Routine*



#### Figure 2.

*Impact of Anxiety*

Anxiety impacts my ability to do the things I



The primary goal of this project was to explore the impact of cancer on newly diagnosed individuals who have minor (dependent) children. This information will be presented in three parts: survey results, in-depth interviews using OCAIRS, and in-depth interviews with instructors of integrative therapy programs.

### Part two:

OCAIRS interviews revealed common themes: **Roles in family became blended, independently sought additional care, and mindfulness as a strong coping tool.**

*I have a spiritual background, and I knew that that piece had to be part of the healing or it wasn't going to be a well-rounded approach to my health. Stress is a huge thing. As soon as you're diagnosed with cancer, the fear comes up. It was a lot for my husband, too, since he is a fear-based person. There had to be more than going to the doctor and relying on that. –"Participant B"*

### Part three:

Analysis of in-depth interviews with instructors developed common themes: **Impact of cancer diagnosis and treatment, need to provide education on integrative therapies, programs typically accessed after treatment, and the value of in-home services.**

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Occupational therapists have an important role in integrative medicine within the home environment. To address psychosocial symptoms secondary to cancer, an occupation-based home program will be offered to the newly diagnosed parents at the Knight Cancer Institute. "Healing at Home" is a program guided by the occupational therapist in the natural setting of the family.

- Three sessions in home environment
- Occupational therapist collaborates with parent and family to address psychosocial symptoms, provide parenting resources, and support the family in maintaining meaningful routines
- With foundations in integrative medicine, program offers support to parent and family to maintain and enhance meaningful roles, routines, and healthy habits during the parent's cancer treatment. The program provides introductions to meditation mindfulness and gentle yoga to support the physical and emotional health during cancer treatment.

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