Self-reported Unmet Needs of Elderly Cancer Patients  
A Cross-sectional Survey in the Province of Quebec

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Presentation outline

- Background
- Study objective
- Methods
- Results
- Lessons learned
- Discussion
Background

• Sparse literature reporting on incidence and determinants of unmet needs for elderly cancer patients
• Consequences unknown and understudied
• Self-perceived unmet healthcare need is a commonly used indicator of access to care
Cancer is a significant problem in older persons
Research and Technology

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Cancer rates among elderly a ‘ticking time bomb’

Study objective

• To report on perceived unmet needs of elderly cancer patients in Québec
Methods

• Secondary analysis of data from a cross-sectional survey (2011)
  • Patients’ perceived care experience
  • 1379 participants (Response rate: 80%)
  • 15% of outpatient cancer clinics in Québec

• Sample: cancer patients aged ≥ 70 years (n=312)

• Measurement instrument: unmet needs were measured using an adapted cancer version of a questionnaire developed to assess unmet needs in the general population\(^1\) giving the opportunity for national figure comparisons

• Descriptive statistics

Clinical characteristics

% respondents (age ≥ 70)

- Time since diagnosis:
  - <1 year
  - 1 to 3 years
  - >3 years

- Comorbidity:
  - No comorbidity
  - >3

- Type of cancer:
  - Hematopoietic
  - Colorectal
  - Breast

- Type of treatment:
  - Chemotherapy + other
  - Chemotherapy alone
Self-reported unmet needs

• 19% of the respondents reported having unmet needs in the previous 12 months

• 48% considered their problem urgent

• 32% perceived it as a threat to their health
*Problem leading to unmet needs*

- **55%** Pain
- **45%** Nausea/vomiting
- **44%** Daily living

*Some respondents gave more than one answer.*
Reasons for unmet needs

- 85% Availability of professional
- 15% Unable to seek care
Consequences of having unmet needs

- Anxiety: 52%
- Stress on families: 60%
- QoL consequences: 52%

*Some respondents gave more than one answer*
Seeking for a response to unmet needs

*Some respondents gave more than one answer
Lessons learned

• 19% reported having unmet needs
  • 8% for elderly in the general population in Qc
  • 11% in the general population in Canada
  • 13% for patients with chronic conditions in Qc

• The leading reason was problems with availability of professionals

• Near half of the elderly cancer patients reported to not having seeking help to find a response to their unmet needs

• Unmet needs have multi-level “ripple effects” for patients, families and health services utilisation

How to change elderly patients cancer experience?

- Magic cook book?
Heterogeneous clientele

- Chronological age
- Biological age
- Functional status
- Comorbidities
- Frailty and vulnerability
THE AGE OLD EXCUSE: THE UNDER TREATMENT OF OLDER CANCER PATIENTS

The « silo » and the two-disciplines dilemma
Thank you!

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