

Cancer-related cognitive problems at work: experiences of survivors and professionals

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Professional: 'To get in touch with a good psychologist somewhere along the way, is just a matter of luck.'

Patient: 'People around you say, yes, but we are all getting older.'

Patient: 'I need clarity about my cognitive ability. I need to know what is actually possible and what is not.'

Patient: 'If you get sick and are going to be treated in a hospital, there will be a treatment plan. And cognitive problems should be part of that.'

Patient: 'I would like to have the courage to share my cognitive problems at work.'

Cancer survivors who experience cancer-related cognitive problems at work have unmet needs, as do professionals in their attempt at supporting cancer survivors facing these problems

Cancer survivors need:

- Acknowledgement of cancer-related cognitive problems that can impact cancer survivors' work;
- Insight into the cognitive processes that hamper optimal functioning at work;
- Tools to cope with cancer-related cognitive problems at work;
- Guidance to cope with fatigue;
- Support for acceptance of cancer-related cognitive problems;
- Support for communication about cancer-related cognitive problems at work;
- Adequate supportive care options for cancer-related cognitive problems at work.

Professionals need:

- Improvement of expertise regarding cancer-related cognitive problems at work;
- Clarity regarding referral pathways;
- Screening.



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Methods

We conducted 3 focus groups with cancer survivors (n=23) and 2 focus groups with professionals (n=15) (i.e., employer representatives and (occupational) health care professionals). Cancer survivors (5 men and 18 women) had a mean age of 49.5 years (SD 11.4; range 31-70 years) and various cancer diagnoses. The majority of participants (82,6%) were highly educated. Cancer survivors worked an average of 31.5 h/week (range 12-40h). Professionals (2 men and 13 women) had a mean age of 46.8 years (SD 10.6; range 29-67) and a median of 9 years experience in their current profession.