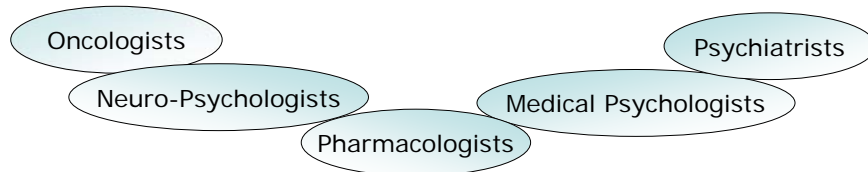


# Treatment Decisions and the Modification of Life Plans in Elderly Cancer Patients

Friedrich Schiller University of Jena, Center for Applied Developmental Science

## Abstract

In our longitudinal study, which is part of a large interdisciplinary research project on geriatric oncology, we investigate predictors of treatment decisions at the beginning of therapy and the modification of life planning during course of the disease in a sample of newly diagnosed cancer patients. Additionally, influences of age and cancer, indicators of severity of disease and psychological resources on subjective well-being and physiological adaptation (e.g. length of survival) are examined in cooperation with



## Selected Research Question & Results

\*Patients' potential aims of therapy (e.g. prolonging length of life or improving the quality of life) and the need for information or participation in decision making process can differ from the doctor's point of view. What are wishes and intentions in old patients concerning treatment? As an example, we found that older patients put more emphasis on effects of therapy on quality of life than younger patients.

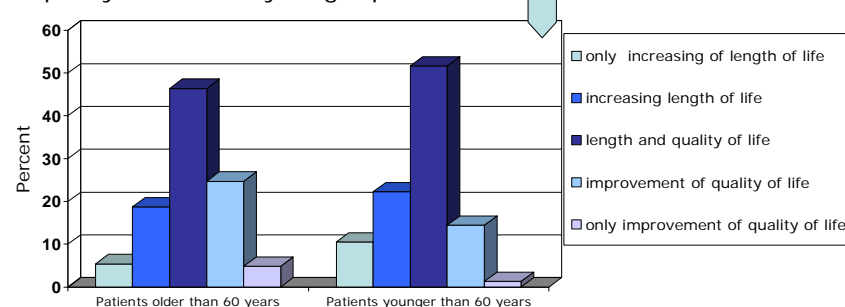


Figure 1. Patients preferences for improvement of quality and length of life.

**Future Plans** Our plans encompassing mainly longitudinal data analyses concerning revisions of life plans.

## Theoretical Background

A cancer diagnosis heralds a potentially life threatening event. Older patients have to cope with cancer-associated and age-associated stressors. In addition, coping resources change across the life-span. Effects of therapy vary between younger and older patients, as older patients can expect less gain in length of life from their treatment.

## Aims

- to develop a guide for a multidimensional geriatric assessment based on information both from patients' psychological and medical parameters
- to provide new insights in the relation between older patients and doctors concerning treatment decisions, and to deepen the understanding of patients' treatment preferences

## Method

Patients suffering from different kinds of cancer are interviewed for the first time (t1) at hospital before therapy starts. Following measurement points take place after 6 months (t2), one year (t3) and 2 years (t4). Interviews with controls are made, following the same procedure.

measurement point	t1	t2	t3	t4
number of interviewed patients	361	171	107	64
number of interviewed controls	214	168	109	42

## Selected Research Question & Results

\*According to tremendous changes in many areas of life following cancer diagnosis, patients consequently adapt their plans and goals for the near and far future.

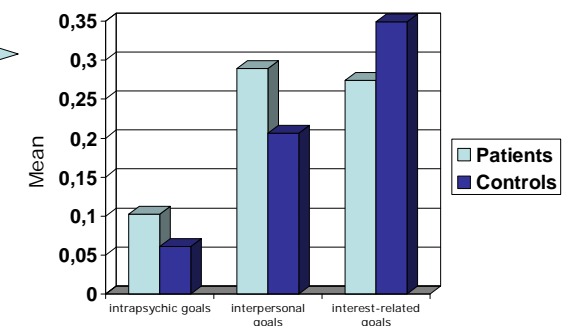


Figure 2. Main effect of health status on three different goal contents.