

# Understanding Smoking Cessation Needs for Cancer Survivors with Food Insecurity

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Master of Public Health Program

## Background

My practicum site was the Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods. I worked alongside Dr. Kim-Mozeleski and her team on a project about smoking cessation needs for cancer survivors who are socioeconomically disadvantaged. They interviewed 40 participants about their experiences with smoking, cancer treatments, shopping for food, financial situations and more.

## Population

Participants were recruited by a third-party company who distributed online advertisements to anyone living in the U.S. All individuals are current smokers living with cancer. Additionally, all participants are over the age of 21 and were screened positive for food insecurity.

## Learning Objectives

1. Organize qualitative data derived from in-depth interviews with participants.
2. Analyze qualitative data by developing codes and definitions
3. Learn how to use NVIVO, a qualitative analysis software, to summarize and interpret the data

## Activities

- Electronically transcribed participant interviews to be readable for analysis
- Developed a codebook based on initial analysis of transcripts
- Utilized NVIVO to analyze trends within the data
- Collaborated with my team to discuss potential themes

## Deliverables

Folder	Name	Description	Sources	References
Codes	Cancer Care Continuum	Refers to continued care after the immediate cancer treatment such as regular check-ups and medication usage	29	38
Codes	Cancer Care Continuum\Medication Adherence	Refers to description of medication adherence or lack thereof	0	0
Codes	Cancer Care Continuum\Medication Regimen	Refers to description of daily or usual medication regimen	10	11
Codes	Cancer Diagnosis	Refers to the type and stage of cancer, how diagnosed, when diagnosed	40	45
Codes	Cancer Impact	Refers to the impacts of cancer on one's life	23	48
Codes	Cancer Impact\Dietary Attitudes and Behaviors	Refers to the impact of cancer on attitudes and behaviors related to diet, such as appetite changes, cravings, cooking	36	43
Codes	Cancer Impact\Environmental Impact	refers to changes in one's physical environment, e.g., moving or nursing home stay due to cancer	2	2
Codes	Cancer Impact\Health-Related Attitudes and Behaviors	Refers to description of health-related attitudes and behaviors due to cancer, such as becoming more health conscious	10	10
Codes	Cancer Impact\Impact of Cancer Beyond Oneself	Refers to the impact of cancer on social life, other people	15	19
Codes	Cancer Impact\Physical Impact	Refers to changes in one's body due to cancer	16	19
Codes	Cancer Impact\Psychological Impact	Refers to psychological impacts of cancer, whether positive or negative	25	32
Codes	Cancer Prognosis	Refers to prognosis of cancer when diagnosed	10	10
Codes	Cancer Support	Refers to having or not having cancer-related support	16	26
Codes	Cancer Support\Clinical Support	Refers to support from clinical supports, such as doctors, therapists, social workers	26	42
Codes	Cancer Support\Support Groups	Refers to participation or not in support groups	9	13
Codes	Cancer Treatments	Refers to various types of cancer treatment, such as radiation, chemotherapy, immunotherapy, medications, etc	39	88
Codes	Cancer Treatments\Bodily Impacts from Cancer Treatments	Refers to changes in one's body due to cancer treatments ex. colostomy bag, mastectomy, feeding tube	10	14
Codes	Cancer Treatments\Complications from Cancer Treatment	Refers to unexpected outcomes that cause long-lasting change	5	11
Codes	Cancer Treatments\Financial Situation	Refers to general financial situation that is related to cancer diagnosis, treatment, and medication, whether changed or not	33	67
Codes	Cancer Treatments\Financial Situation\Medication	Refers to cancer treatment medication cost/affordability	10	18
Codes	Cancer Treatments\Forgoing Cancer Care or Treatment	Refers to forgoing cancer care or skipping medications due to various barriers such as cost, side effects, transportation, etc	1	1
Codes	Cancer Treatments\Side Effects of Treatments	Side effects include medication side effects ex. hair loss, weight loss/gain	28	39
Codes	Cost of Smoking	Refers to smoking-related financial costs	21	22

Figure 1- Codebook for Data Analysis

**Navigating Financial Assistance During Cancer Treatments**

While many cancer centers have financial assistance programs for their patients, these programs are **severely underused**.

- CancerCare** ([cancercares.org](http://cancercares.org))
  - Offers financial assistance for cancer-related costs, including transportation, child care, and co-pays.
  - Provides professional support services and counseling to cancer patients and their families.
- HealthWell Foundation** (<https://www.healthwellfoundation.org/>)
  - Offers financial aid to help with the cost of medications for cancer patients, including grants for co-pays, premiums, and other out-of-pocket expenses.
  - Helps with various types of cancer, covering different treatment needs.
- The Pink Fund** (<https://pinkfund.org/>)
  - Provides 90-day grants for patients undergoing breast cancer treatment
  - Covers non-medical expenses such as housing, utilities, transportation, and insurance.
- NeedyMeds** (<https://www.needy-meds.org/>)
  - Maintains a database of assistance programs for prescription medications, medical supplies, and services for those without adequate health insurance.
  - Also has resources for travel and lodging related to medical treatment.

Figure 3- Infographic of resources for participants struggling with quitting smoking long-term

Figure 2- Infographic of resources for participants struggling with cancer treatment payments

**The Journey Towards a Smoke-Free Life**

Many people find quitting nicotine to be an isolating experience, especially if their social circles include smokers. A sense of community can help participants feel less alone, which can make the quitting process more sustainable.

- Nicotine Anonymous**
  - A 12-step program, similar to Alcoholics Anonymous
  - Holds regular meetings, both in-person and online, where members can connect with others going through similar challenges.
- 1-800-QUIT-NOW**
  - A national quit-line that provides free support and counseling.
- KWIT**
  - A phone app that provides daily motivational content, track progress, and offer support through structured quitting plans.
- QuitNet**
  - A well-established online support network for people quitting smoking, featuring forums and support groups.

## Lessons Learned

During my practicum experience, I gained a deep appreciation for the value of qualitative data, especially in uncovering systemic issues that often go unnoticed. By actively listening to individuals' lived experiences, I came to understand the complexities of these issues beyond statistics. This approach not only broadened my perspective but also highlighted how personal narratives can reveal gaps in existing systems. I also learned how to appropriately analyze qualitative data by recognizing patterns and themes that contribute to a deeper understanding of broader issues.

## Public Health Implications

The purpose of this project is to understand the unique challenges that cancer patients who smoke and face food insecurity have in adhering to treatment plans, managing side effects, and maintaining overall health. A deeper understanding of these overlapping issues could inform the development of tailored interventions, such as nutritional support or targeted cessation programs that address the specific needs of this population.

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