

“A tsunami of cancer” and mental health: the impact of negative emotions on illness acceptance in cancer patients

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Cancer, as highlighted by numerous researchers (Caldirola et al., 2025; Hsiao & Lee, 2026; Karademas et al., 2025), represents a life-threatening medical condition in which psychological factors, particularly emotion-related processes, play a substantial role in patients' adaptation and overall functioning. For the individual, a cancer diagnosis constitutes a highly stressful and potentially traumatic life event that evokes a broad spectrum of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses across different stages of diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship. It profoundly disrupts personal goals and future-oriented plans, necessitates significant lifestyle adjustments, restricts the fulfillment of social and professional roles, and may alter interpersonal relationships. The aim of this presentation is to examine—based on the authors' empirical research (Krok et al., 2025; Krok et al., 2026)—the role of emotional processes in psychological adaptation to cancer. Central to this line of research are negative emotions, e.g. fear of recurrence and generalized anxiety, which play a pivotal role in the psychosocial functioning of cancer patients. This perspective enables an exploration of how negative emotions operate within the stress transaction process among individuals diagnosed with cancer, as well as the identification of potential mediating mechanisms through which patients experience emotional outcomes and adjustment.

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