

# The perception of prognostic awareness from the perspective of patients and their relatives

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## BACKGROUND

Prognostic awareness (PA) can influence patient's capacity for advance care planning, but the knowledge of how patient's prognostic awareness is perceived by their relatives is limited. **The aim of this study was to assess patients' and relatives' understanding of patients illness while exploring how they perceive each other's understanding of the patient's health condition.**

## METHODS

This was longitudinal cohort study with cancer patients (N1=133, N2=77, N3=44) and their relatives (N1=91, N2=28, N=18). Data were collected in three waves over 9 months by questionnaire. Two questions were used to assess the perception of PA: **"How would you describe your/patients' health condition?"** and **"How do you think your family/patient would describe (your) health condition?"** Respondents choose from 4 answers ranging from "Relatively healthy" to "Seriously and terminally ill". Data were analysed by descriptive statistics.

## RESULTS

While patients reported their health condition in all three waves as "Seriously ill, but not terminal" (N1=63; N2=40; N=19) their relatives reported patients' health condition as "Seriously and terminally ill" (N1=53; N2=13; N=10).

Analysis of relations between patients and relatives perception of health status and estimation of each other perception shows that majority of respondents has good estimation of each others perception. If not, respondents usually estimated their loved one's are more optimistic about health status, then they actually are. There is only one exception - in third wave relatives estimated that patients know their illness is terminal, even they did not (n=5).

## DISCUSSION

This study showed that **patients and relatives perceive patient's health condition differently, with relatives assessing patient's condition as more serious.** Although estimation of each other perception is usually correct, relatives expected patients to have more accurate PA than they actually had.

