

# Coping with changes related to cancer and aging allows for healthy aging and quality of life among older adults living with/beyond cancer.

“I get up in the morning and cancer is the wall that I bang my head against all day, every day. It's always there in my face because we haven't cured it yet, so ... I'm trying to push through. I'm trying to be the best person I can... **If you dwell on the situation, it's going to drown you. So, you have to just keep moving forward.**”

“I guess in my life I've had a number of health issues. So, and this cancer thing, you know, it's changed my life. There's no doubt about that. Because they pull your bloody prostate out and then other things can happen. **It changes your life, but you move on. You just keep living.**”

## Understanding Healthy Aging among Older Adults Living with and Beyond Cancer

Ailsa Sirois<sup>1</sup>, Kristin Campbell<sup>2</sup>, Margaret Rudolf, Schroder Sattar<sup>3</sup>, & Kristen Haase<sup>1</sup>

1. School of Nursing, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada 2. Department of Physical Therapy, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada 3. College of Nursing, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada

### Background

- More older adults (OA) – those age 65+ - are living with and beyond cancer and may experience challenges related to health, well-being, and aging<sup>1</sup>.
- Healthy aging is a process that allows for optimal functional ability and well-being among OA<sup>2</sup>.
- There is a need to better understand the intersection between healthy aging and OA' experiences living with and beyond cancer<sup>3</sup>.

**The purpose of this study was to explore the meaning of healthy aging in OA living with and beyond cancer.**

### The research questions were:

For OA living with and beyond cancer:

1. How do they define healthy aging?
2. What is the role of cancer in their engagement in health promotion?

### Methods

- Interpretive descriptive approach<sup>4</sup> with serial, in-depth interviews (n=2), with 20 community-dwelling OA living with/beyond cancer who lived in British Columbia, Canada.
- Patient-oriented research methods with a patient partner (M.R.) co-leading the supervisory committee.
- Interviews focused on defining healthy aging and understanding health promoting behaviours and gendered norms.
- Data were thematically analyzed<sup>5</sup>.

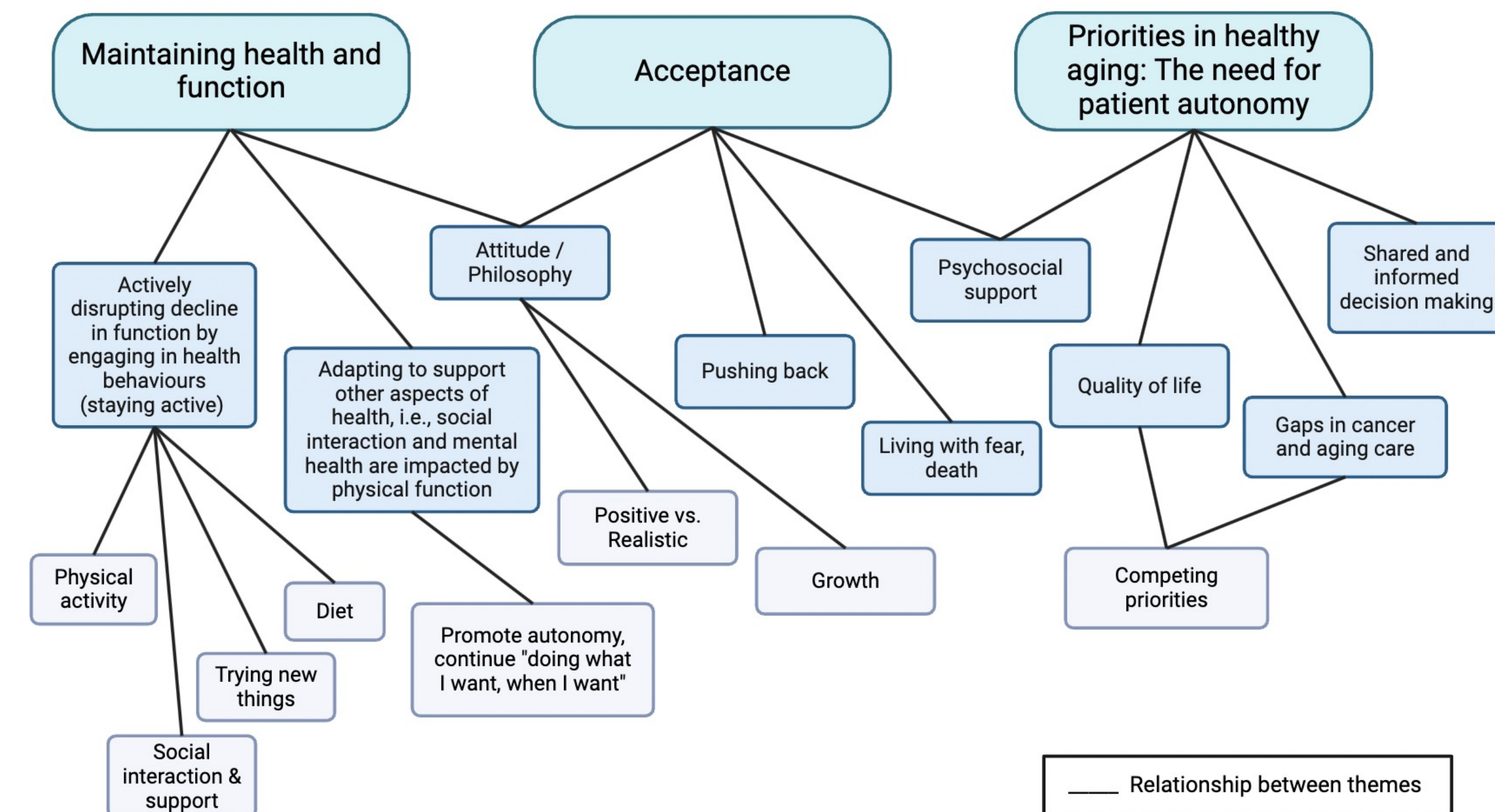
**Sample (n=20):** Median age 74; 35% identified as women; 60% lived in urban communities; 35% reported currently undergoing long term cancer therapy. Most common cancer sites: Prostate (n=10); Breast (n=5); Multiple Myeloma (n=3); Other (n=5).

### References

1. Fitch et al. Challenges of Survivorship for Older Adults Diagnosed with Cancer. *Curr Oncol Rep.* 2022;24(6):763–73.
2. WHO. World report on ageing and health. World Health Organization; 2015.
3. Kobayashi et al. New directions in cancer and aging: State of the science and recommendations to improve the quality of evidence on the intersection of aging with cancer control. *Cancer.* 2022;128(9):1730–7.
4. Thorne. *Interpretive description.* 1st ed. New York: Routledge; 2008.
5. Braun, Clarke. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qual Research in Psych.* 2006 Jan;3(2):77–101.

### Findings

Thematic Map: Coping with changes related to cancer and aging allows for healthy aging and quality of life



### Significance

- Understanding the experience of healthy aging among OA living with and beyond cancer is critical to promoting health for this growing population.
- These findings provide evidence on how to support healthy aging for OA living with/beyond cancer. Nurses are well positioned to address these gaps and this work can inform future interventions.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the OA living with/beyond cancer who participated in this study and shared their experiences. This work is funded by the Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology. Ailsa Sirois holds a Research Training Award from the Canadian Cancer Society and Early Career Nurse Leader Award from the University of British Columbia.



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA  
School of Nursing



Canadian  
Cancer  
Society



Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology  
Association canadienne des infirmières en oncologie