

# Emergency Cancer Diagnoses- Impact on Healthcare Staff. Initial Analysis.

Karen Wingfield, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board & Cardiff University;  
Dr Sarah Fry, Cardiff University; Professor Daniel Kelly, Cardiff University.

## Introduction

There is no unified clear definition or terminology available to define patients presenting with cancer as an emergency. A scoping review conducted in 2022 identified research gaps in both the impact of the diagnosis on patients and Healthcare Professionals (HCPs). Research into understanding the HCPs and ancillary health care workers experiences is needed to inform the patient emergency diagnostic cancer pathway and the future development of Acute Oncology Services (AOS). This doctoral study focuses on the impact on HCPs in District General Hospital (DGH) who are involved with this group of patients.

## Method

- Qualitative narrative inquiry study in two contrasting Welsh University Health Boards (UHBs).
- Individual, one off, informal recorded interviews (F2F or online) using a conversation guide, transcribed verbatim. Pseudonyms are used to anonymize participants and used in quotes.
- 13 participants -five doctors, seven registered nurses and one Physician's Associate (PA).
- All working clinically in emergency/acute medical specialties in the UHBs.

## Initial Analysis and Themes

- What is the impact on me at work and home?
- How do I manage these patients?
- How could I do this role better?

I do change my demeanour quite a lot and become Dr [surname removed] during those moments.

**Gethin**

**Dr, Senior House Officer**

I've learned just how to be really, you know, comfortable with saying and like "this is my role in the picture and I will not be able to answer that but the reason I'm saying is because of, you know, getting involved and that's why I'm here. I'm the person that's on the ward at this time"

**A**

**Dr, Senior House Officer**

Umm I've never actually done sort of any advanced communication skills courses. I'm definitely interested in undertaking, you know training or education that would enhance my ability to communicate effectively in these circumstances.

**Seren**

**Registered Nurse, Band 8b**

Now and again you'll go back to the office have something really sad and have a little cry but then you are off and out...then doing it again aren't you?

**Bethan**

**Registered Nurse, Band 7**

In this case in particular the Friday night I had social plans, I actually cancelled them. I just, I just, I just did but and I rarely do that, but it was the right thing and I knew it was the right thing because I actually I just needed some alone time.

**A**

**Dr, Senior House Officer**

## Conclusion

Participants described preparing themselves mentally, physically and logistically to break bad news. The impact of this part of the role is felt at home and at work. Participants were keen for communication training around breaking bad news. Ongoing analysis will build on the themes to inform recommendations for clinical practice, education, and research.

**Contact:**

[wingfieldk1@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:wingfieldk1@cardiff.ac.uk)