Physicians’ personal characteristics, as a predictor for oncology patients’ satisfaction with emotional care

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Late stage cancer patients must deal with a significant amount of stress associated with their diagnosis. There is little known about how well the emotional needs of oncology patients are met by their physicians. A system known as VERONA has been developed in order to measure the extent to which physicians are able to respond to the emotional cues and concerns of their patients. By coding transcripts of patient-physician interactions, using the VERONA coding system, quantitative data about a patient’s perception of the quality of the emotional care they have received can be obtained. This project seeks to determine whether a physician’s personal characteristics can serve as a predictor for a patient’s satisfaction with the emotional care they’ve received. Information on personal characteristics of the physicians was obtained from surveys that the physicians completed as part of a larger study and included characteristics such as; age, gender, attachment style, extent of job burnout, and perceptions about mindfulness and empathy. Preliminary results indicate that there is a correlation between patients’ satisfaction with emotional care and physician traits such as; being female, having higher degree of job burnout, and higher levels if self-reported mindfulness. The results of this study could be used to develop programs or policies which train physicians and medical students on how to improve their interactions with late stage cancer patients.