Patient Perceptions of Sustainability and Why Oncologists Should Care: A Scoping Review

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INTRO

- The healthcare sector is responsible for **8.5%** of the U.S's greenhouse gas emissions.[1]
- Cancer care is particularly resource intensive and longitudinal.
- Sustainability efforts must align with patient priorities.

OBJECTIVE

- To characterize patient perceptions of environmentally sustainable healthcare and examine implications for oncology practice.

METHODS

- Scoping review of Web of Science and PubMed. Included: discussions of decarbonization strategies, emissions reduction, and cancer care pathway "greening."

Identification
Key words: Patient perceptions, attitudes, sustainability, climate change

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Screening and Eligibility
Excluded: Healthcare workers, students, residents as subjects. Studies not in English or performed in non-clinical settings.

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Final Inclusion
(n = 21)

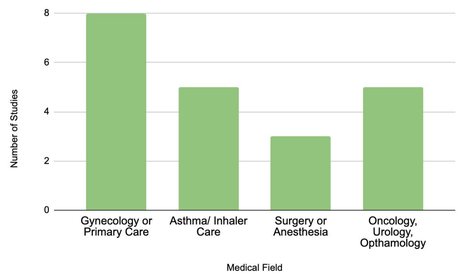
Conclusion

Patient perspectives appear broadly compatible with sustainability initiatives that preserve clinical efficacy, safety, and patient-centeredness; however, oncology-specific evidence remains limited.

Five studies explicitly stated that most (over 50%) subjects are aware and concerned about climate change.

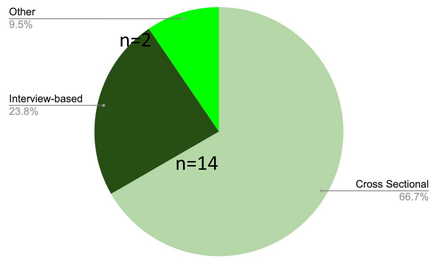


Figure 1. Area of Care.



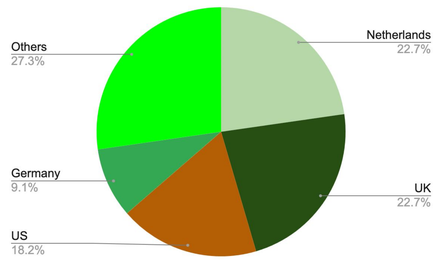
For the two studies on oncology, one surveyed views on climate change and intention for cancer screening and another on social determinants of health among cancer patients.

Figure 2. Study Design



Under others, one study was a data analysis and the other was a testimonial.

Figure 3. Geographic Distribution



Vast majority (20/21) of studies were performed in Western countries. Under "others," one study was conducted in Canada, New Zealand, Nigeria, Singapore and Spain each.

COMMON THEMES

- Three studies show that patients are willing to make trade-offs in terms of cost, ease of use, and comfort. Clinical outcome remains the priority.
- Three studies highlighted patient's unawareness regarding the healthcare system's impact on the environment.
- Two studies mentioned patients' willingness to learn more about the environmental impact of medical treatments, and another two studies showed that awareness of medical treatments correlated with climate friendly healthcare perspectives.
- Factors influencing whether patients chose the more environmentally sustainable treatment are complex, such as fears of contamination when choosing between single-use or reusable cytoscopes, or having fewer follow-up consultations for fear of relapse.

LIMITATIONS

- No studies surveyed the perspective of vulnerable populations, such as rural patients and patients undergoing active care treatments.
- As most studies were performed in academic hospitals/tertiary care centers, subjects may not be representative of patients in the country overall.
- Inclusion of only English studies.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Active projects CARE-Path (interview-based study of oncology patients) and COE (survey study) at Lichter Lab will provide information on the perspectives of rural patients and cancer patients.
- Systematic review on cancer care decarbonization strategies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are extremely grateful to the following individuals, who are part of CARE-Path and COE: Ali Pardini, Andrew Binder, John Ejiogu.

REFERENCES

Dartmouth GEISEL SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Lichter LABORATORY