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# **Cancer Survivorship**

**Exploring the relationships among Gender,  
Religion, Spirituality, Health Behaviours and  
the Quality of Life of Cancer Survivors**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the Master of Arts in Psychology at Massey University,  
Palmerston North, New Zealand

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2012

# ABSTRACT

More people are surviving cancer now than ever before and research with cancer survivors has grown considerably. International research has identified that the cancer experience does not end when treatment ends, but instead is a journey that can continue to weave a complex and multifaceted path that can collide with numerous domains of an individual's life. Many factors have been identified within the cancer experience that can impact on an individual's quality of life for the rest of their life. Factors such as, type and stage at diagnosis of cancer, treatment, social support, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, employment, health behaviours, gender and religious and spiritual beliefs.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that can influence the quality of life of those who have had cancer in the New Zealand population. The particular focus was the differences between males and females and those who identify as Religious or Spiritual, the health behaviours of cancer survivors were also investigated.

The study analysed data from the Health Work and Retirement 2006, 2008 and 2010 surveys, which collected data from over 6000 New Zealanders aged from 55 to 75 years. This group was seen to provide a good representation of those who have had cancer in their lifetime.

Results from this study were varied, supporting as well as contradicting overseas research. No differences in gender and quality of life were identified, however males were found to consume more alcohol and exercise more frequently. Females reported to be more religious and spiritual than males. Religion did not impact on quality of life however spiritual activities impacted negatively on physical health. Over time religion and spirituality contributed to improved mental health. A mediating relationship was identified with those who participate in more spiritual activities consuming less alcohol and in turn have poorer quality of life.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A huge thank you to Dr Christine Stephens for all her support, knowledge and patience over the last 14 months. I could not have asked for a better supervisor to take this academic journey with.

Brendan Stevenson for all your assistance with SPSS, your knowledge was invaluable.

Jacqui Gregory for her support, encouragement and her consistent cheerful and down to earth advice.

Thank you to my better half Neil, I could not have done this without you. Your patience and faith in me kept me going through the times when self doubt was starting to creep in. Your quiet, calm and steady presence helped to keep me grounded and focused.

Rachel Doloughery and Graeme Jelley for offering their editing expertise and reading through my thesis when I could no longer see the wood from the trees.

My family, thank you for your support.

Finally, to my Father Terry Cleaver and my dear friend Naomi McRae. I chose to do this thesis topic out of great respect for the journeys you have both been on. Your sheer determination and strength to combat a disease that can be so fierce and relentless is simply inspiring.

You are my heroes.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
LIST OF APPENDICES .....	x
CHAPTER ONE: THE CANCER SURVIVOR.....	1
1.0    Introduction.....	1
1.1    Why cancer survivor research?.....	1
1.2    What is cancer?.....	4
1.3    Who is the cancer survivor?.....	9
1.4    Cancer survivorship .....	10
CHAPTER TWO: QUALITY OF LIFE IN CANCER SURVIVORS.....	13
2.0    Introduction.....	13
2.1    Definition of Quality of Life.....	13
2.2    Dimensions of Quality of Life.....	15
2.2.1    Physical Health Dimension.....	15
2.2.2    Mental Health Dimension .....	16
2.3    Aspects that affect QoL Outcomes.....	18
2.3.1    Socio demographic factors (Age, Socio-economic Status).....	18
2.3.2    Employment.....	19
2.3.3    Ethnicity.....	20
2.3.4    Rural/Urban Accommodation.....	21
2.3.5    Health Behaviour: Physical Activity.....	22
2.3.6    Health Behaviour: Smoking.....	23
2.3.7    Health Behaviour: Alcohol Consumption.....	23
2.3.8    Health Behaviour: Social Support.....	24
2.4    Gender and QoL .....	25
2.5    Religion/Spirituality and QoL .....	27
2.6    Summary and Research Goals.....	32

2.6.1	Research Questions.....	33
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY .....		35
3.0	Introduction.....	35
3.1	Procedure .....	35
3.1.1	The population of interest .....	35
3.1.2	Participant selection .....	36
3.1.3	Survey participants.....	36
3.1.4	The questionnaire.....	36
3.1.5	Survey design.....	37
3.2	Measures .....	39
3.2.1	Quality of life.....	39
3.2.2	Gender.....	40
3.2.3	Religion and Spirituality .....	40
3.2.4	Alcohol use .....	41
3.2.5	Smoking identity .....	42
3.2.6	Physical activity .....	42
3.2.7	Social support.....	43
3.2.8	Cancer participants.....	43
3.2.9	Socioeconomic status (SES) .....	44
3.2.10	Ethnicity .....	44
3.2.11	Age.....	45
3.3	Data Analysis.....	45
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS .....		47
4.0	Introduction.....	47
4.1	Characteristics of the participants.....	47
4.1.2	Data management .....	48
4.1.3	Descriptive analysis and frequencies of variables .....	48
4.2	Gender.....	51

4.2.1	Research Question One.....	51
4.2.2	Research Question Two.....	51
4.2.3	Research Question Three.....	54
4.2.4	Research Question Four.....	55
4.3	Religion and Spirituality.....	57
4.3.1	Research Question Five.....	57
4.3.2	Research Question Six.....	58
4.3.3	Research Question Seven -.....	61
4.3.4	Post Hoc Analysis.....	64
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....		67
5.0	Introduction.....	67
5.1	Gender.....	67
5.1.1	Research Question One.....	67
5.1.2	Research Question Two.....	68
5.1.3	Research Question Three.....	68
5.1.4	Research Question Four.....	71
5.2	Religion and Spirituality.....	72
5.2.1	Research Question Five.....	72
5.2.2	Research Question Six.....	74
5.2.3	Research Question Seven.....	75
5.2.4	Research Question Eight.....	77
5.2.5	Research Question Nine and Ten:.....	77
	Ad Hoc Hypothesis:.....	78
5.3	Strengths and Limitations of the study.....	79
5.4	Conclusion.....	80
5.5	Future Research.....	82
APPENDIX I: MEASURES USED FOR HWR STUDY.....		83
Including 2006, 2008 and 2010.....		83

APPENDIX II: HWR 2006, 2008 and 2010 Surveys .....	91
REFERENCE LIST .....	92



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Sections of the three HWR surveys .....	37
Table 2. The Dilman structured approach to survey design.....	38
Table 3. Mean and standard deviations for all variables.....	49
Table 4. Bivariate correlations of relationships with Gender and QoL. N=61 .....	53
Table 5. Levels of alcohol consumption between males and females. ....	55
Table 6. Number of smokers and non-smokers between males and females.....	55
Table 7. 2008 correlations between Gender and Religion/Spirituality. N =202 .....	56
Table 8. 2008 correlations between QoL and Religion/Spirituality. N=202 .....	57
Table 9. Correlations between QoL, Religion/Spirituality and controlled variables (age, sex, ethnicity), in the 2006, 2008 and 2010 surveys. N=61 .....	60
Table 10. 2008 correlations between Religion/Spirituality and Health Behaviours. N=202 .....	63
Table 11. Mediation test using regression on Alcohol Consumption mediating Spiritual Activity Frequency and Physical Health QoL. N=202.....	66

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Mean scores of hours of moderate physical activity per week between males and females.....	72
Figure 2. Test of Alcohol consumption as a Mediator of linkage between Spirituality and Physical QoL.....	83

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix I: HWR study measures.....	84
Appendix II: 2006, 208 and 2010 HWR surveys.....	92