

STIGMA



#LetsTalkAboutCancer #RightToHealth

People with cancer not only have to face their illness and treatment, but are also often confronted with stigmatising responses.

- Stigmatisation can manifest in different ways, such as family or friends who avoid the person with cancer, as well as blaming.
- Research has shown that stigmatisation has detrimental effects on the psychological well-being and quality of life. It can also impact health-seeking behaviour (when symptoms are experienced) and adherence to treatment.
- However, cancer-related stigma has received limited attention and this needs to change - anecdotal evidence by CANSA indicates a considerable problem in many communities.
- Limited attention has been paid to specific cultural beliefs regarding cancer and how these beliefs contribute to cancer-related stigma.

What CANSA is doing

- CANSA is conducting an exploratory, qualitative study to explore (cultural-specific) perceptions of cancer in the general public that may contribute towards cancer-related stigma in KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. Furthermore, we'll explore cancer patients' experiences of cancer-related stigma in both regions. The aim is to get better information to develop interventions that may address stigma in communities and assist patients to cope.
- We intervened when a young cancer patient was rejected by her community and provided support and educational information <http://www.cansa.org.za/cansa-tlc-staff-intervene-when-young-cancer-patient-is-rejected-by-community/>
- Photo Voice Project was part funded by CANSA and conducted by Dr Lynn Edwards. (<https://www.canceralliance.co.za/toolkit-5-cancer-stigma-photovoice-stories/>). It looked at cancer patient experiences to assist with planning and execution of cancer advocacy activities. Qualitative data was collected via 317 interviews with patients, family members and healthcare providers. Participants were also able to choose a photograph to portray their experience. Twelve key themes were identified from the data. The challenge associated with stigma was one of the themes identified.
- The Photo Voice project has formed the basis of the development of the Cancer Alliance advocacy toolkit and priority areas; it's been presented to local and national Departments of Health as well as has informed CANSA's service delivery programme. Two papers have thus far been published from the data - <https://sajo.org.za/index.php/sajo/article/view/14> and here: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2017.1357187>