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OLDER PEOPLE'S CANCER PAIN EXPERIENCE, PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Aims Despite knowing that cancer and cancer treatment can cause pain there is limited knowledge of how older people experience cancer pain and how this affects their daily lives. Here presented are some methodological insights and early findings from a PhD study that aims to consider how older people construct the experience of cancer pain and how this is informed by expectations and experiences.

Method A qualitative diary-interview study was conducted with purposively selected older people who had been diagnosed with cancer and were in receipt of specialist palliative care. A two week page-a-day diary informed a subsequent interview to ensure holistic and person focused data about experience.

Findings Older people are willing participants but tend to adopt a stoic role when living with cancer pain. Preliminary results show that older people are reluctant to self identify as living with worsening cancer pain and unwilling to express and discuss their pain as a problem, rather something to adapt and live with. Carers and or health care professionals may reinforce vulnerable and stoic stereotypes through gate keeping with associated stances of protection and advocacy. The participants appeared to be satisfied with the care provision for symptom management. However, the convention of stoic ageing is knowingly maintained with occasional glimpses of vulnerability. This image contrasts with the presented and perceived representation of older people with cancer as vulnerable.

Conclusions Representation of the voice of older people through a diary may help the individual to present their experience more effectively to a third party. Awareness of older people's experience of cancer pain, through diary use and shared experiences, may give health care providers a greater understanding of the older persons support needs.