

<b>TYPE</b>	Research study	<b>LAST UPDATE</b>	September 2021	<b>AUSTRIA • NATIONAL</b>
<b>STATUS</b>	Finalized			Cancer care – Psycho-oncological care

## PROBLEM & OBJECTIVE

**PROBLEM** An implemented measure under the National Cancer Framework Program is to ensure that all cancer patients in Austria undergo psychosocial screening to systemically identify psychosocial stress and mental disorders at an early stage. Given the lack of relevant data, the Oncology Advisory Council commissioned the Austria Public Health Institute to assess psycho-oncological healthcare in Austria.

**OBJECTIVE** The aim was to conduct an Austria-wide, regionally differentiated survey of the psycho-oncological and psychosocial care offered to cancer patients (adults and children) in different care settings.

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## KEY COMPONENTS / STEPS

Implementation of the studies: Austrian Public Health Institute.

- The central research questions were essentially answered by using three methodological approaches including (1) literature analysis, (2) statistical evaluation of the diagnosis and service documentation of hospitals, and (3) online survey in acute inpatient and day clinic care and oncological rehabilitation units.
- Complementary methods included (1) a second survey was conducted among representatives of the psycho-oncological professional associations and (2) interviews with persons who completed appropriate psycho-oncological training.
- The selection of standardized, valid screening instruments is based on the "S3-Guideline Psycho-oncological Diagnosis, Counselling and Treatment of Adult Cancer Patients", in which the psychometric quality criteria and evidence levels for seven screening questionnaires were determined after a systematic literature review. These scientific tools are suitable for implementation in Austrian acute hospitals and oncological rehabilitation centers.

## KEY CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

- The inventory of psycho-oncological care makes clear that the goal defined in the National Cancer Framework Program "to provide psycho-oncological care to all persons diagnosed with cancer, their relatives and special groups of persons with a defined increased cancer risk (familial, genetic)" is not yet fully implemented in Austria.
- Moreover, the occupational title "psycho-oncology" is still not licensed.
- The National Cancer Framework Program explicitly identifies the development and implementation of uniform, validated screening tools for the indication of special psycho-oncological care as an action.
- It should be emphasized that the implementation of screening procedures is closely linked to the existing care structures and psychosocial services of the respective setting.

## ADDED VALUE/LESSONS LEARNED

The results of this study led to a number of important conclusions and recommendations for a future, needs-oriented design of psycho-oncological and psychosocial care provision in Austria.

- First and foremost, the recognizable deficiencies in psycho-oncological care must be remedied in stages, including considerable room for improvement in terms of personnel resources, treatment concepts for the individual care settings, low-threshold offers, care-setting networks, documentation and supervision.
- The overall priority is to ensure and further develop the outpatient psycho-oncological and psychosocial services, including aftercare.
- In view of the increasing demand, more initiatives are needed to train and recruit suitable and sufficiently qualified academic staff (e.g., in the relevant courses of study).
- An expected increase in incidence and prevalence rates due to demographic change must be taken into account in the planning of requirements.
- In order to find out the specific need for additional psycho-oncological diagnostics and therapy, it is recommended to carry out a screening test as early as possible (e.g., during the initial inpatient admission after diagnosis).
- This report shows that the scientifically grounded field of psycho-oncology is structurally anchored in the health care system in Austria.

## REFERENCES & DOCUMENTATION

- Psychoonkologie in Österreich – Bestandserhebung, Bd. 1.
- Psychosoziale Versorgung von Kindern- und Jugendlichen mit einer Krebserkrankung.
- Krebsrahmenprogramm, Kurzfassung 2014, Bd. 2.
- Screening-Instrumente in der Psychoonkologie
- <https://www.sozialministerium.at/Themen/Gesundheit/Nicht-uebertragbare-Krankheiten/Krebs.html>