

Age differences of interpersonal coping measured by a psychooncological screening questionnaire

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Background

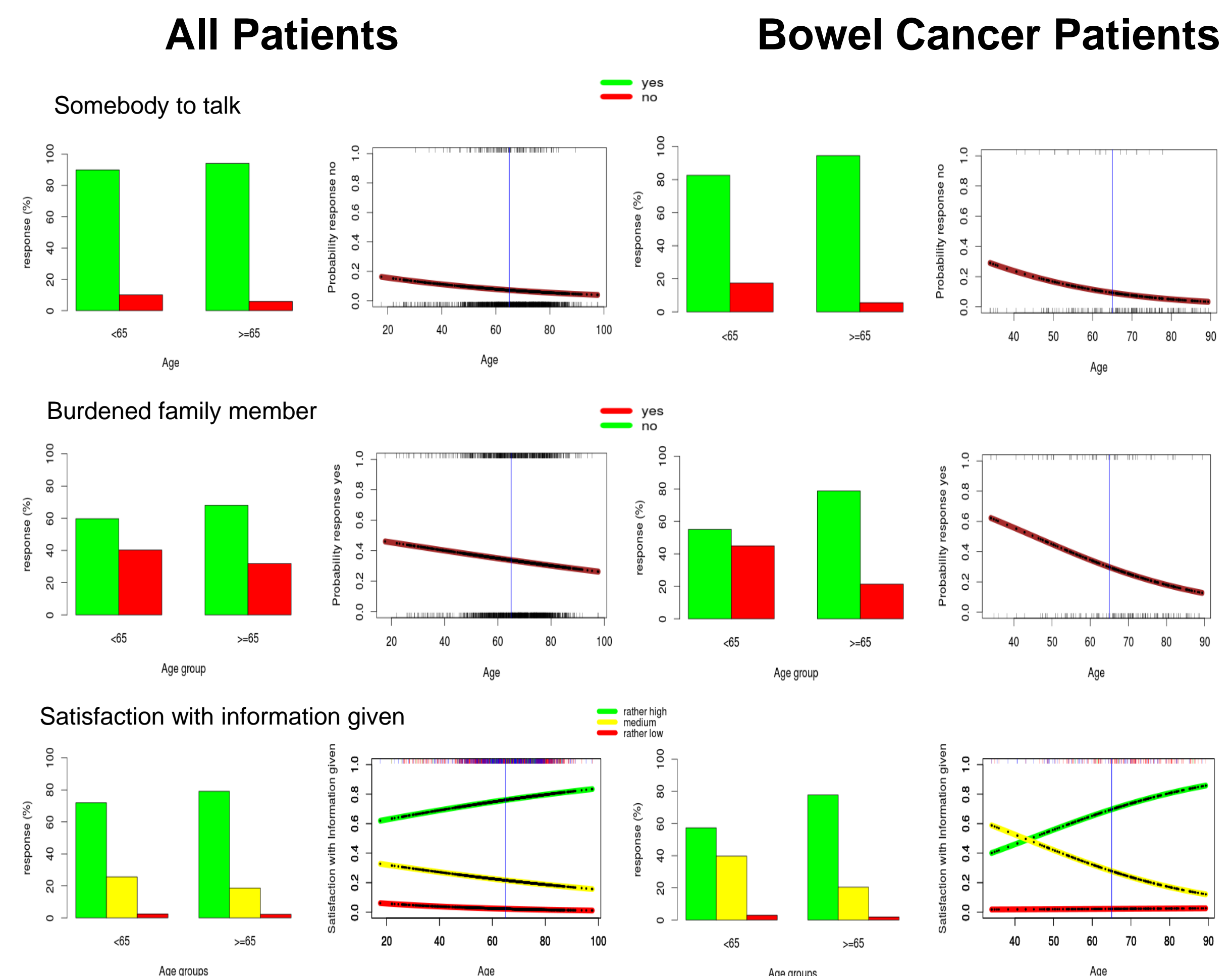
Interpersonal coping with illness varies across the life-span (Berg & Upchurch, 2007). However, not all patients are able to use functional coping strategies. Though, dysfunctional interactions in close relationships of cancer patients can be improved by psychooncological counselling (Ernst & Weißflog, 2016). To identify those patients in need for psychooncological support regarding their interpersonal needs, a screening measure should include questions addressing relationship aspects. In the present project, we were interested to find out, whether the screening instrument (Hornheider Screening Inventory (HSI)) used in our hospital can disclose age-dependent differences in interpersonal resources and burdens in our patients population. This would help to distribute psychooncological resources more effectively.

Method

For three years, all cancer patients treated stationary in our certified cancer centers are asked to fill out the standardized 7-item-version of the HSI at admission to the hospital. 1940 questionnaires were returned, 1855 of them with complete data. For data analyses we focused on the three items capturing interpersonal issues. For analysis we splitted the patients into two groups based on age. The split criterion was set at 65 years. At this age, employees in Germany can start retirement and therefore, this is a critical social milestone. Furthermore, it is the mean age of our population. Thus, patients younger than 65 can be regarded as „early affected“ and patients older than 65 as „late affected“. Our sample consists of patients with 14 different tumor entities, the most common being prostate, other urological, ear-nose-throat and bowel tumors.

Results

	All	Prostate	Urol.	ENT	Bowel
N	1855	694	464	204	182
mean age	67	68	67	66	66
% female	19	0	25	20	38
Do you have somebody to talk to about your fears and sorrows? (HSI-item 4)					
effect of age	$p_{\log, \text{reg.}} <.01$	0.89	0.2	0.15	<.05
	$p_{\text{fisher exact}} <.01$	0.73	<.05	0.26	<.05
Is somebody in your family especially burdened by your hospital stay? (HSI-item 5)					
effect of age	$p_{\log, \text{reg.}} <.05$	0.61	0.08	0.29	<.01
	$p_{\text{fisher exact}} <.01$	0.07	0.92	0.14	<.01
How good do you feel informed about your disease and its treatment? (HSI-item 7)					
effect of age	$p_{\log, \text{reg.}} <.01$	0.48	0.17	0.73	<.01
over all	$p_{\text{fisher exact}} <.01$	0.17	0.74	0.45	<.01
0 vs 1	<.01	0.44	0.47	0.33	<.01
1 vs 2	0.51	0.09	1	0.37	1
0 vs 2	0.62	0.18	1	0.77	0.59
	p_{binomial}				
0	<.01	<.01	<.01	0.32	<.01
1	0.28	<.01	0.14	0.68	0.7
2	0.34	<.05	0.73	0.58	1



Conclusions

The screening measure could indeed detect age differences in interpersonal items

- Overall, patients were satisfied with the information given to them about their disease and treatment.
- „Late affected“ patients were more satisfied with the information than „early affected“ patients.
- „Early affected“ patients have a higher probability of having nobody to talk to about their fears and sorrows.
- „Early affected“ patients also assume more often that a family member is affected by their hospital stay.
- All of these age differences are larger for patients with bowel cancer than for the other patient types.

Take-home message:

Patients of different age differ in their psychosocial resources and require help that is tailored to their individual needs:

- ✓ „Early affected“ patients have other information needs than „late affected“ patients
- ✓ Bowel Cancer in younger age seems to be particularly stressful interpersonally
- ✓ The tested screening measures can be used to tailor the treatment better to the individual needs and provides an easy way to predict upcoming resource demands.

Acknowledgment

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Literature

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