

“Feeling foggy after cancer diagnosis and treatment?” – Assessing self-reported cancer-related cognitive impairment and associated factors in Portuguese cancer survivors

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Cancer-related cognitive impairment (CRCI) is a common and potentially debilitating symptom experienced by non-central nervous system (CNS) cancer survivors (CSs) throughout the disease trajectory. Considering its consequences and high prevalence, it is essential to identify individuals with CRCI to guarantee adequate supportive care to those who need it. In this context, members of the Psycho-Oncology Research Group of the Department of Education and Psychology of the University of Aveiro, within the project “CanCOG – Cognitive Rehabilitation in Cancer®”¹ (Figure 1), conducted studies to explore self-reported CRCI in Portuguese CSs. The Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy-Cognitive Function-Version 3 (FACT-Cog-v3) is the most extensively used instrument to evaluate cognitive complaints in CSs. A sample of 281 adult non-CNS CSs participated in a study to evaluate the psychometric properties of its Portuguese version². The findings of this study confirmed that the scale can be considered a reliable and valid measure to assess perceived cognitive functioning (PCF) in Portuguese non-CNS CSs. Another study used this instrument to evaluate PCF in Portuguese breast cancer (BC) survivors and to explore associated psychological adjustment³.

This cross-sectional study included 146 women (73 with BC and 73 with no cancer history) and verified that, compared to healthy women, women with BC showed more cognitive complaints. Furthermore, higher levels of anxiety and depression were associated with cognitive complaints. The results of these studies highlight the need for healthcare professionals to recognize subjective cognitive complaints as a legitimate side effect of cancer and its treatments in non-CNS CSs. Moreover, the present findings highlight the importance of tackling this problem with specifically designed clinical interventions that target both the cognitive impairments and the psychological adjustment of patients.

Reference

- [1] <http://cancog.web.ua.pt/>
- [2] Oliveira, A. F., Santos, I. M., Fernandes, S., Bem-Haja, & Torres, A. (2022). Validation study of the Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy-Cognitive Function-Version 3 for the Portuguese population. *BMC Psychology*, 10, 305. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-022-01018-w>
- [3] Oliveira, A. F., Torres, A., Teixeira, R. J., Monteiro, S., Pereira, A., & Santos, I. M. (2022). Perceived cognitive functioning in breast cancer patients treated with chemotherapy compared to matched healthy women: Evidence from a Portuguese study. *International Journal of Nursing Practice*, e13119. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijn.13119>

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FIGURE 1
CanCOG's logo.

